

**WHAT A
SMART
BUSINESSMAN
FORGETS**

WHAT A SMART BUSINESSMAN FORGETS

Author

Huzefa Motiwalla



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Huzefa Motiwalla is an IT Engineer and a Business Coach with more than two decades of hands-on experience in handling businesses.

Huzefa has worked with MSMEs, independent businesses, and professionals in the field of IT, Training, Consultancy, Dentistry, Precision Industry, Mechanical Engineering, and the like. Over the years, Huzefa has developed expertise in management, system definition, pre and post sales, and business development.

He is passionate about creating efficient & effective businesses to fulfil the needs of the businessmen's future. He believes in translating ideas from different disciplines into practical models, and that is the key driver of business growth. In his life & work, Huzefa creates a combination of psychology, systems, management, engineering, and street smartness and he churns success stories out of them.

Huzefa lives in Pune with his parents, wife, and two children. He is a fun-loving person, a researcher by nature, "and a language-enthusiast".

Huzefa Motiwalla

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Don't be the same. Be better.

Index

<i>Dedication</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Reviews</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>How to read this book</i>	<i>xix</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xxi</i>

The Shop With A Single Door.....	1
Who Walks Through Your Door?.....	7
Smart, Humble And Starving.....	11
Time And Tide Wait For No Man.....	17
A Shortcut Towards Growth.....	23
A Bird's Eye View.....	29
The Royal Brain Drain.....	35
The Finicky Perfectionist.....	41
Rowing The Boat Without Any Oars.....	47
The Art Of Fine Balance.....	53
A Blurred Vision Sees No Image.....	59

Who Is On The Wheels.....	65
Lazy In Bed.....	71
A Blunt Saw Cuts No Wood.....	77
Set Your Sails With The Wind.....	83
What Isn't Seen Isn't Sold.....	87
One Step Forward Two Steps Backward.....	95
Comfortable Being Uncomfortable.....	101
Working In, Not On The Business.....	107
Two Sides Of The Same Coin.....	113
What Do Your Customers Want?.....	119
Too Lonely At The Top.....	125
Consistently Inconsistent.....	131
Too Many Ladles Spoil The Dish.....	137
Be The Light To Brighten Your Path.....	143
Serving With Style.....	149
Categories And Classification.....	155
Dare To Dream.....	163
Prospects and Potential.....	169
What's Your Game Plan?.....	175
Epilogue.....	181

Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my brother,
Mustafa Bhai. Thanks for being there for
me - every single time.*

Acknowledgements

I'm grateful to my clients. You have contributed to this book both directly and indirectly. I enjoyed learning from your experiences in my coaching journey.

I'd like to express my deepest thanks to Mom and Dad, my wife Tasneem, and my children Ruqaiyah and Mustafa – for pushing me towards completing this book. My family and friends – you'll have supported me in this journey of writing.

This book would not have been possible without the support of two people.

First, my wife Tasneem. This book would not have come into existence without you holding me accountable day-in-day-out.

Second, Vasudha Lal - for being the patient and skilled editor. This book is readable because of you.

And a special mention to Vijay Wakchoure, my friend from Sansee Designs for the awesome, minimalist book cover.

My deepest gratitude to the Action Coach community for contributing to this book with your system, experience, and collective wisdom.

Reviews

Huzefa has written what every entrepreneur struggles with - a lack of a dashboard to measure performance and the inability to manage enough new customers.

This includes not understanding who an entrepreneur or a professional like a dentist should be targeting.

Written in an easy-breezy style, it has many thoughts on the pitfalls facing a business, be it 3 years or 50 years old.

After all, entrepreneurship is not really taught but only learnt from the hard knocks of life.

An interesting quick read with good takeaways which can be implemented.

Great for all those businesses who need to take their practice to the next level.

Kiran Bhat

Chairperson and MD

Xebec Communications Pvt Ltd.

Kiran is an Industrial Psychologist and Co-author of the book *No Holy Cows In Business*.

Nice, Simple, Concise and Focussed. That is how I will describe this book.

Huzefa's approach to a rather complex topic, like Business Growth, is quite unassuming. Coupled with the simple language and series of activities, this book will certainly vibe well with the businessmen of today.

Huzefa has taken pains to collect the gems that one misses out during the entrepreneurship journey. His title - What A Smart Businessman Forgets - is very apt with the content and the audience, both.

Everybody aspires to become successful - but they lose track of their journey somewhere midway. This book should bring us back on track!

With proper narrations, this book has brought forth the right examples to unveil the deep questions behind each story through which he illustrates the concept of success.

This book certainly has an instant appeal.

Dr Vijay Wadhai

Dr Vijay is an academic personality with 21 patents, 8 books and 200+ research papers and journals.

Huzefa Motiwalla, in his book - 'What A Smart Businessman Forgets' takes the reader through a series of stories and topics that compel the readers to think about their business growth. 30 chapters on various topics like Sales, Marketing, Planning, Mindset, Team, Systems... Indeed, the book is an inspirational compilation, more specifically, 30 deep-grilling questions which no one ever asked an entrepreneur.

This book and the activities give more empowerment to the courage and intellect that a business owner has in many ways.

I have interacted with Huzefa before - but this book and its title got me excited. I looked forward to more books from Huzefa in the space of inspiring and bringing businessmen to action.

Pradeep Karambelkar

Pradeep is the Executive Director of BNI Bhopal region, a seasoned entrepreneur and startup mentor.

Businessmen today realise that there are so many simple things they can do in order to navigate their life correctly.

There are two main problems with businessmen. The first problem is that most people are too lazy to implement new ideas in their lives. They read books, they listen to podcasts, they watch videos but fail to make an effort to actually utilise them.

The second problem is that they have a myopic view of their own businesses. An entrepreneur can rattle off a list of ideas for growth (or complaints why he can't), but then he misses the larger picture.

What Huzefa has done here is more than what he writes in words. One needs to see through them.

The simplicity in the examples makes it relevant to all the audience. Soloprenuers, Franchise Owners, MSME and every Entrepreneur.

If you implement the activities that he has laid out after every chapter, there is no stopping from achieving new heights.

Gaurav Marya

Chairman - Franchise India Group, Author of *Take Charge!* and many other books on Franchising and Entrepreneurship.

How to read this book

I agree hands-down that all smart businessmen are busy. Finding time to read a book (or even finding motivation to read!) is not easy. It can be a struggle, I agree! This book has been written for you so that you can enjoy the easy structure and follow it. It is written in simple, jargon-free language. I am confident that this will help you to transform to where you belong.

I do not hold claim to any of the material that I bring in this book. In fact, all knowledge comes from the supreme source through different tributaries in different languages and has landed in this book.

There is just one rule when reading this book - and I will share it with you in a moment.

It is quite possible that you have heard, read or crossed roads with the ideas that I have brought in this book before. I urge you to read them nonetheless, without judgement. There is a reason and a rule behind this.

When we come across a piece of information that we know of already, our mind tells us that "I know this piece", and stops us from accepting or processing it. In such a situation,

please do not let your mind say, "I know", rather say, "Isn't it interesting". When you say, "Isn't it interesting" you train your mind to keep its windows open and accept new knowledge (and wisdom) from the same old information that we were aware of.

When you read and accept this information with an open mind, new dimensions open up and help you move one step forward.

At the end of every chapter, there is an activity. Please do the activity along with the chapters. I urge you not to move to the next chapter without doing the activity.

The activity is a series of questions that will invoke you to introspect, take action and become a better you - a smarter businessman.

Foreword

It is an honour!

I was surprised when Huzefa sent me an advance copy of his book, following it up with a request for the foreword.

Intrigued, I got down to read the book, and to my surprise, I could not put it down till I read it through the last chapter.

Having beautifully captured the challenges entrepreneurs face, he has peppered his experiences and learnings to bring out the simplicity of finding the answers if one chooses to put their mind to it.

Huzefa, very simply brings to the fore the error business owners often make in getting embroiled in managing their day-to-day business challenges that they lose focus on steering the ship called Business to Success.

I love the way he challenges entrepreneurs with his poignant yet hard-hitting questions to help them with serious soul-searching.

A must-read for young as well as established entrepreneurs, invaluable knowledge is shared while forcing them to introspect.

I wish Huzefa Motiwalla continued success.

Coach Ratish Pandey

Ratish is a certified Executive and Business Coach.

He has been awarded Entrepreneur of the year in Business Services by Entrepreneur.com.

Chapter 1

The Shop With A Single Door

Mona, known as the best chocolatier on M. G. Road, Pune, comes across as a chirping and bubbly business owner as you enter her shop. She invites you to taste a select few of her hand-crafted chocolates before you place your orders. She is passionate, explorative, innovative and full of energy when it comes to creating her product, chocolates. Mona is known for her delectable delights not only in the

market but also in the entire district.

Each morning, she crafts fresh chocolates at her outlet, and the fresh aroma fills in the air. One can spot her outlet by the chocolatey aroma from afar, enough to lure customers from a lane away. Customers come searching for her outlet, tracing the aroma. They spend time with her, talking and learning about her craft, musing over her collection of hand-picked ingredients and the art of making chocolates. No one goes out empty-handed; in fact, they walk out smiling, savouring the aromatic taste in their mouth and a bagful of purchases. It was customer reference, word of mouth and the aroma that brought customers flocking to her business. Business flourished despite no investment in publicity or advertising. Mona was living her dream. Until recently, when the tides turned over.

I met Mona last month and was in for a shocking surprise. In a short span of one business year, she seemed to have aged, her face tired with worry and sadness. Decreasing footfall had changed everything about her vibrant business. Ever-increasing count of home bakers and cooking enthusiasts during the pandemic had caused her insurmountable losses.

Mona, being the hardworking kind, went about her business as she had always done. She did not cater to the changing dynamics of business that the pandemic had brought for every business owner. The markets were closed for a long, long time, so the aroma in the air could not summon shoppers and the negligible count of footfalls barely kept her business going. It soon turned into a survival tale amongst the far too many. These business owners had not catered to the dynamics created

by the global challenges faced by all. Mona, too was banking on miracles and luck to smile on her. Businesses run on these parameters of luck and miracles, but it also requires a sound system of publicity and visibility. It is good to be optimistic about one's business, but banking on a single strategy is not good for a prospering business to continue doing so.

Mona had fallen into her self-created trap.

Alas, such is the case of entrepreneurs who adopt only one business strategy. Although, there is nothing wrong with having one single sales strategy that works wonders for you. But only one strategy to attract customers and close sales at all times?

I have interacted with many entrepreneurs and wonder about their one-door policy for running their businesses forever. The policy to have only one sales strategy in business at all times, irrespective of the market dynamics!

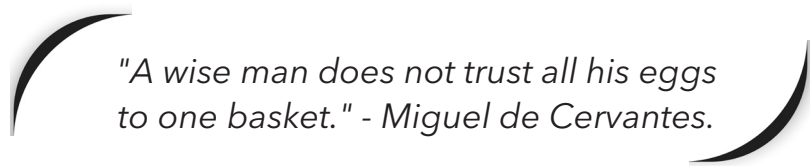
Can an entrepreneur afford to have only one sales strategy? Can you propose a solution to Mona?

Let us play a game of dice. Now roll two dice together. Wait for luck to select a number for you. The higher the count, the more the number of customers you fetch. If you get two, you roll the dice again. Sounds cheeky, right?

Nobody gets customers by rolling a dice and hoping to see customers walk in through the door. True. This is exactly what Mona had been doing. With only one strategy in place, she hoped to get a thick pipeline of customers. What are the odds in her favour?

A smart business owner does not keep one door open to have customers walking in. They have flood gates open where customers pour in like water from a dam. There should be many doors of opportunities for customers to come in. Keeping only one door is like cornering yourself. If you are looking at growing your business manifold, increase the number of avenues to attract your customers. Have doors of opportunities to attract, inform, invite, interact, and welcome them. Only one strategy to get customers is not enough.

A growing business needs more strategies to get customers from different avenues. Limping with only one business strategy is detrimental to growth. It is suicidal.



Before you move ahead, dear entrepreneurs, what will you do to avoid being trapped in the corner?

Activity 1

- How many strategies do you have in your business right now?

- What three new strategies can you devise in the next three months?

- Are they practical in your line of business?

- What is the cost of implementing these strategies?

- What will you do to implement these strategies?

- Is your business ready to cater to more customers from three more streams?

- What will you do to ensure that these strategies do not fail?

Chapter 2

Who Walks Through Your Door?

"Benedict is a dentist and a friend. When I asked him who his customers were", he said they were of two kinds; people with teeth and people without teeth. That was a witty response from a vibrant and friendly dentist. And it clearly shows that the entire neighbourhood has the potential of being prospective customers.

Sounds like music to the ear but not so easy. Soon this music

turned into an argument when I asked him, “If people with or without teeth are your prospects, why is there no rush outside your clinic? People in the entire neighbourhood should be lining up, if not climbing on top of each other to reach you.” Unfortunately, he did not have a satisfying answer to any of my questions. He had never thought of looking at his business of dentistry from a different lens. His view was that whoever walks in is a customer, while those who visit another dental clinic are not. This clearly shows Benedict had never thought of expanding his horizon, increasing the baseline of his prospective customers.

As we look at things differently, Benedict, as a dentist, caters to both kinds of patients but does not work towards translating his practice as a business opportunity. And to create a new customer base, he does not necessarily have to look into every mouth to see whether there are teeth inside. His need is to focus on who his customer is. Benedict must fine-tune his parameters qualifying his customers like:

- What networking circles to align?
- What age bracket do they belong to?
- What are their hobbies, and which geography do they belong to?
- Do they have any other illnesses?

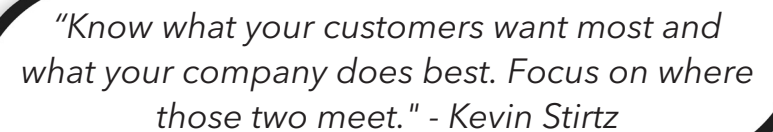
Every doctor is already doing this. He knows exactly where his next customer is coming from. The focus should be on knowing his next customer well enough.

Let this be a call for action.

Every business owner knows his customers very well. They should be able to write an essay of 300 or more words describing their client and their lifestyle. Have a sharp focus on the customer such that one can create an avatar and then command the mind to search for people fitting into that avatar.

Let us understand with an example. Suppose Benedict's next customer could be living within a four-kilometre radius. He may be driving a particular car, having two children aged between 7 and 15, and having parents-in-law. They like to swim and play football with their friends at a particular club.

You now have the parameters to look at customers and design strategies to attract them. Dr. Benedict could meet his customer avatar at any social event, be it in the pool, the club, or at school. He could make conscious efforts to make himself visible. Only then would our customer-avatar find Benedict as an approachable and amiable dentist. They could visit him for their children's dental check-ups or get implants for parents and in-laws.



“Know what your customers want most and what your company does best. Focus on where those two meet.” - Kevin Stirtz

Activity 1

- Can you define your ideal customer's avatar?

- Which networking groups does your customer attend?

- Where does your customer go when he has a need?

- What are your customer's needs and what are the pain points as of now?

- What different alternatives can you propose to resolve the pain points?

- What else does the customer need that you can offer to address?

- What is it that your customer needs but you cannot offer to address?

Chapter 3

Smart, Humble And Starving

Param comes across as a shy and soft-spoken person. He is a life coach in his mid-forties. A benevolent gentleman, he is confident and knowledgeable. He often visits networking events with a large heart. Always giving in nature, he is highly approachable. People flock to him with problems and he happily helps resolve them.

As a life coach, he shares his wisdom and gives his counsel to one and all. There is one flaw in his mechanics, though. What he gives out during networking for free is his basic bread and butter. Should he not charge for this? How long will he afford to share his knowledge and wisdom at the cost of hunger at home?

He is giving away a lot of consultation for free and people flock to him only for the freebies. And then they come to him again for the next dose over a new problem. And the cycle continues, alas, without any money on the table. I am curious about his revenue stream.

How long can he afford to offer free counsel as a gift or charity?

It seems his strategy is to create credibility through these counsels. He is working on his strategy and credibility, and it might be a nice way to attract customers.

But how long will he afford to give his services for free?

Is it because he is shy to ask for his fee or invite people for his professional service when they approach him with problems?

Should he draw a line between creating credibility and getting paying customers?

- Should there be a signal that feeds his mind to stop giving for free?
- What is stopping him from offering his services for a professional fee?
- Is he shy and feels awkward selling his services?
- Can a salesman afford to be shy?

Every entrepreneur is also a salesman. Every professional is

a salesman; in fact, every human is a salesman. There are no exceptions.

- When could we recommend Param put his foot down and begin his sales pitch?
- How can he put aside his hesitancy and talk business?

It is inborn and natural to be empathetic. And we agree that it is good to help someone in need. Then how does one bring business through the intervention? One should learn to draw a balance between being shy and being reasonable.

It is what is going on inside the mind that determines whether sales will happen or not. Success and failure in selling are all mental work. One must develop these psychological qualities because they then form the foundation of personal sales success.

- Use more of your potential. The average person, in general, never uses more than 10% of his potential. 90% of his potential is left untapped.
- Observe the world outside and study the competitors. If they are performing better, it just means they have discovered the relationship between selling and success before someone else. Learn by observing them.
- Do not hesitate to approach others in the field. People are usually willing to help those who want to succeed.
- Your self-concept is a bundle of beliefs you have about yourself. It is the operating system that determines everything one will say, think, feel and do.

There is a direct relationship between self-concept and performance and effectiveness:

- How you perform on the outside is consistent with your self-concept.
- Improvement begins when you alter and improve your self-concept, your inner programming.
- Mini self-concepts, determine your effectiveness and performance in each area of your life.

Have a good self-concept and believe in it firmly. This is the very foundation of your being. It guides you in your ultimate goal of being a top salesman. Believe that you are capable of being at the top. Have a calm, confident, relaxed attitude. Change your mind bit by bit. In your mind, you must already achieve your financial goals before you can achieve them in reality. Imagine as though you are already that awesome person. In the case of our life coach, Param, he needs to begin believing in himself that he does not need approvals from others to prove his credibility; thus, he need not bend backwards and offer his services for free. He needs to let the fritters away and start pitching his services boldly, and make full use of his potential.

"You can never earn 10% more or less of your self-concept level of income."- Anonymous.

A more detailed study on this topic is in Brian Tracy's book *The Art of Closing the Sale*.

Activity 3

- What is your concept about yourself as an individual? Do you see yourself as strong or weak in confidence? How will you rate yourself?

- If you find yourself shy, what steps would you take to move shyness towards confidence in asking for business?

- What is your self-concept in the context of your business? Do you see your business growing every day, or is it subjected to market and competition?

- Do you have sales targets for your business? Do you track them daily or weekly?

- Do you calculate ROI on your networking or marketing avenues? If yes, elaborate. If not, do it now.

Chapter 4

Time And Tide Wait For No Man

Taher had a pace of running his business and also his life. He believed things have a way of falling in place at an appropriate time. He had never made a plan, nor did he set a priority on his tasks. Whether it was a launch of a new product or meeting an important client, he always said all would fall in line when the time was right.

Soon enough, things began to get out of hand and his business dwindled.

Did time play devil? Or did he plan his fall in business?

Dear readers, can I play Taher's coach for the next few minutes in this chapter? I take your nod and continue from here. To manage his time well, it is wise for Taher to follow some discipline in his routine affairs:

- To have some regimen about setting SMART goals
- Focus on the goals to meet them
- Break them into small tasks
- Set a time limit to avoid burnout
- Take breaks between tasks
- Organise yourself
- Remove non-essential tasks
- Plan ahead of the day

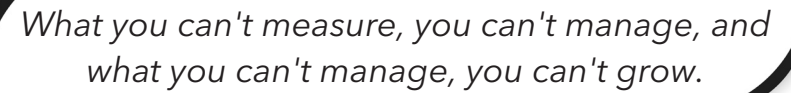
Simple?

Time management is about doing things that you want to do, when you can do and when you are at your best to do them. Time Management has nothing to do with time; it is about you. This calls for planning, discipline, and brutal honesty with self.

This is the only resource that one cannot reclaim; time.

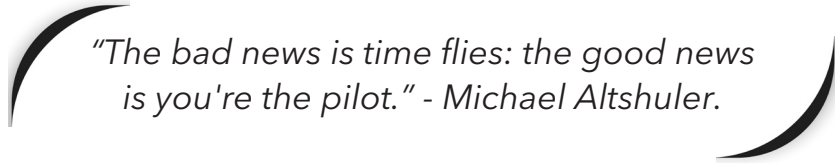
Smart entrepreneurs spend their money well and they should spend their time well too. In today's era of digital overdose and media exposure, focusing on time has become daunting. If one

wishes to make good use of time, it does not happen overnight.



What you can't measure, you can't manage, and what you can't manage, you can't grow.

To make good use of time, one has to manage it well. And to manage it well, first, understand where this time goes. How much time goes into which activity? Do you enjoy the time spent there, or is it out of habit or compulsion? Differentiate between urgent and important not in abstract terms but in concrete terms.



"The bad news is time flies: the good news is you're the pilot." - Michael Altshuler.

To have a better handle on your time management, read Stephen Covey's book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Activity 4

- What is the value of one hour of your time today?

(A) What is your earning / profit in one year?
(B) What is the amount of time you put in your business in a day?
(C) How many days in a week do you work?
(D) How many weeks in a year do you work?

The value of one hour of your time today is $A \div (B \times C \times D)$

- What is the value of one hour of your time today? Let us calculate.
- Your calculated value of one hour of your time today is.....
- Now that you know the value of one hour of your time today, what do you want to be the value of one hour of your time in future, one year from now?

- Are there any steps you could take to increase productivity?

- How would you rearrange your time to have some extra bit of time?

- What non-essential tasks would you remove from your schedule?

- What would you do, beginning today, to plan your month/week/day?

Chapter 5

A Shortcut Towards Growth

Nikhil, a thorough professional in manufacturing swimwear, is a dear friend and known in the industry as an ace in a pack of cards. Nikhil's success lies in the very fact of his skill - his attitude of attention to detail. He delivers quality products with utmost precision to his customers. As a result, he runs a flourishing business and there came a need to strengthen the workforce. He alone was not enough to

handle the ever increasing orders, managing the supply chain along with maintaining quality standards. He needed more hands who were reliable and committed to his value system. He felt family would be the best choice to make, so he invited his close relatives to handle business verticals and manage increasing volume.

Being a perfectionist to the hilt, he would engage himself personally in all matters of his business. He began to feel the pressure. Keeping up at all levels, at all times, was never easy for anyone. Soon things began to slip out of his hands. Some incidents of loose-ends splitting out started to bother him. This happened due to the lack of a structured working system. A perfectionist, Nikhil took control wherever his team failed. This led to slips in quality and consistency. In such situations, he began micromanaging his staff - in the bargain, and he began stumping their creativity. This was leading to repercussions and heartburn.

Nikhil had all he needed to run his business to taller heights. To maintain customer inflow, he required a tracking system. A tracking system with every little detail of business was a critical necessity. To track customers' lifecycle right from the start to repeat sales at all times.

He realised that his customer's success was the key to everything. His business was because his customers were happy. And that he needed a system to track every customer's experience. And ensure that customers get a uniform experience. And this becomes a permanent task in his workflow, not a seasonal or a one-of-a-time task.

Having a system, for example, to track a customer's lifecycle does not mean having CRM software to manage leads. If his business has too many walk-ins or too many B2C customers, then a CRM would help track the leads. Monitoring leads in a business is like monitoring pulse rate or body temperature. Nikhil should place a system to track these leads to closure. And this data will create the intelligence coming out of data analysis. Every data is like gold and one cannot afford to let gold disappear. It does not stop there. Having a systematic approach to handling a uniform experience for customers is paramount.

Nikhil must use some tools to systematise the business. A combination of a checklist, job cards, to-do lists, reminder systems, and software solutions. These tools will ensure his customers get a uniform experience at all times.

A system is irreplaceable. System help is an augmentation of our human intelligence. It does not replace it. An intelligence that ensures that nothing slips out of attention.

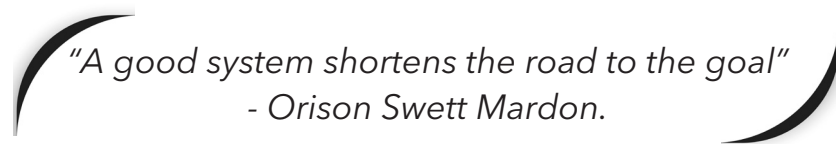
When devising systems, it is also important to track the progress of the system as a whole. It is like a yardstick. In tracking the progress of the system, one is in control at all times. Something that was missing in earlier times.

One such example is that of a golden book. Nikhil introduced a golden book for registering complaints. When any staff registered complaints that affected their work, everyone appreciated it. And if a customer brought complaints to the register, it was taken as a favour. Efforts to ensure that the problem gets resolved and the customer knows the progress.

And the customer gets a feel good factor because he helped in contributing to the systems. With this system in place, every complaint was sought and eliminated. The customers relied on Nikhil more.

The key to the whole process of systems is to install, track, and fetch reports. Reports help in improving customer and business expectations. It serves as a guideline to all business stakeholders and staff alike.

The world runs on systems, and they work in spite of humans, not because of us.



Work The System by Sam Carpenter is a book with a detailed description of the nature of systems, their ubiquity, and how you can use systems for yourself to optimise life.

Activity 5

- Imagine your best customer and the best experience he had while dealing with you. Make a list of all the things that contributed to giving him a good experience.

- Now that you have a list of all the things that influenced the client, what will you do to ensure that each and every item in the list is repeated 100% with each and every client?

- How will you ensure that the process is not missed out or left to chance?

- What metrics will you capture - at all stages of the "experience" of the customer?

- What steps will you take if you want a systematised business that runs without you?

Chapter 6

A Bird's Eye View

The other day, I was driving my car and it struck me for a short second that all the lights on my dashboard were glowing. I immediately moved my car to the side and started checking the controls. Was the hand brake working fine? Were all the doors shut tight? I stepped out to check battery connections and the level of engine oil. Plus, all the other parameters are blinking on the dashboard. I walked

along the car a couple of times and double-checked all the tyres for air. I breathed a sigh of relief, regained my confidence and eased back on the road.

This is the function of a car's dashboard - warn of any urgency. Before looking at the dashboard, I was under the impression that everything was fine. It was only when it started glowing nonstop I saw a warning about battery health and engine oil. I realised that I need to pay attention to these warning lights before moving the car any further. Had I not done this, I could have been stuck on the expressway.

Can a driver move on the expressway without paying good attention to the dashboard?

The dashboard shows all the parameters needed for a safe and trouble-free journey. I realise I don't look at the dashboard, check the battery, check engine oil, definitely not every morning. The dashboard displays all the critical parameters, informing drivers at all times.

Imagine what could entail for a lazy driver who, as a habit, does not follow the habit of a basic check of the car every day?

The dashboard is in front of the driver, rider or pilot. Its purpose is to display the status, instructions and controls for the vehicle's operation. The driver does not go to the dashboard. It is so designed - so that it is visible to the driver at all times. This brings mental alertness. It serves as a guiding star, sometimes a warning bell, before things get out of control, if at all. Its primary function is to provide status at-a-glance.

Should a business owner have a dashboard for his business?

How, if we have a dashboard that shows the health of the business at all times, will it impact the business?

A dashboard usually sits on its own page and receives information from linked systems. It comprises a count of enquiries from clients, leads, complaints, revenue, and reminders. It alerts when cost heads breach and tracks the conversation rate of leads with clients.

A business owner generally knows all or some of these parameters. But they are all approximations or assumptions along the lines of the subconscious. They are not in the conscious frontline of thoughts.

Having a dashboard helps track the health of a business. A dashboard like this should be available before demand at all times.

What happens when a business owner does not have a dashboard?

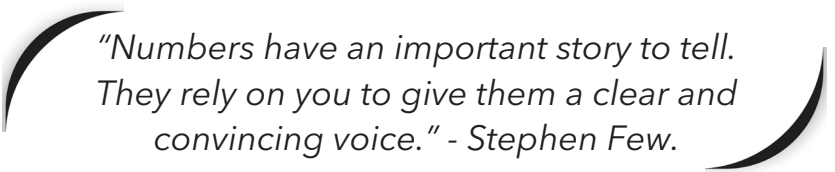
The business owner makes decisions based on assumptions and not on facts. With access to an updated dashboard, business owners will always be in control. They will be aware of the problems before they become problems. A business owner monitors his dashboard to delegate work and focus on critical areas. Tasks that get him business get him money too, and add to his fun-skill matrix. I will talk more about the fun-skill matrix in the chapter related to time management.

Will you be in a better position to manage the business if you keep track of these tit-bits of data? Represented in a summarised format through this dashboard? Will you be in

a better position to manage your business? Once you manage your business better, you will be able to set targets for yourself in an organised manner.

For example, measuring the number of leads walking in and tracking how many of them reach closure. What is the time an enquiry takes to become a deal? Once you start measuring the number of leads and the conversion rate, you will be able to manage it better. You may want to set tasks for yourself and your team to increase the count of leads and the conversion rate. And once you start measuring this and managing it, you are set for growth. Can you imagine the ease of doing this just by having one powerful tool - a dashboard!

If you don't take rough chances with your car on the highway - why would you risk chances with your business?



"Numbers have an important story to tell. They rely on you to give them a clear and convincing voice." - Stephen Few.

Do you have a dashboard presented on your table every day when you reach your office? Are all critical parameters available on your dashboard right now?

Activity 6

- What are the critical parameters of your business that contribute to growth?

- What could you do to get these parameters, without much effort, every day or every week?

- How could you automate or simplify populating the figures on the dashboard? Can you do it by yourself or rather delegate this to your assistant?

- What figures do you want to monitor daily?

- What figures do you want to monitor weekly?

- What figures do you want to monitor quarterly?

Chapter 7

The Royal Brain Drain

Prakash, a lively entrepreneur, is creativity personified. He is very talented, and his work in the industry has always been ahead of his league. He is thorough in his work and gives a lot of attention to detail. He believes that God is in the details and it is for this reason that Prakash is skeptical about hiring assistants.

Even if he were to hire, he would hire only someone willing to work for less. And work twice the time and stay lifelong with him. Prakash's logic was to hire the one who was loyal and could trust his business for a lifetime. Why not? Prakash had put his life's efforts into building his business and bringing it to this level. He would not hire someone who would play foul and pull this hard-earned business reputation down.

Prakash always feared his staff would leave, taking all his ideas and secrets to his competitors. Or what if they started their own business, competing with him? He would end up in terrible soup.

Prakash had heard so many stories that he dreaded hiring smart people. If he hired a smart hand, he would expose the risk of either duping, body-shopping, or drainage in business. He hired people with lower IQs – who don't think out of the box and are less worthy to competitors or recruiters.

Like Prakash, even if a business owner hires, he is always concerned about the level of quality. Being a one-man army with his own methods, a business owner pours his heart and soul into his business. Is expecting that level of dedication from staff in the initial days far-fetched? Push them a little and they are ready to leave and join their competitor.

Talented staff with a good IQ have many reasons to switch businesses. They are also human with a combination of complex emotions. They have needs to fulfil in this lifetime. There are many popular studies that report why the staff is unhappy. The most common reason is career advancement. Career opportunities will always keep presenting themselves.

Is it your work to provide them with enough opportunities to grow in their career?

Another popular and practical reason is the forever lack of better compensation. If one feels that their dreams remain unfulfilled working with you - they have a strong reason to move.

Many times the situation also presents itself in different ways. When the staff realises that this job is not in line with their area of passion. Finding one's passion is not an easy task - neither for the staff nor for the business owner.

Bad management and lack of processes cause frustration at work. It brings negativity to the workspace. The lack of good culture and toxicity in the environment forces them to separate. And they look out for greener pastures. If the staff does not gel with the environment or feels unheard, he does not feel included. And then even the brightest of staff will not find it easy to stay back.

- What happens when the rules of the game are not well defined?
- When the vision of the business owner is not aligned with that of the staff?
- When a common mission statement is missing?

This will always create gaps in commitment and will bring a twist to the outlook.

I have come across many businesses where the owner works 24x7 while the staff works with a 9 to 5 attitude. It is important to respect work-life balance.

What if your priority doesn't match theirs?

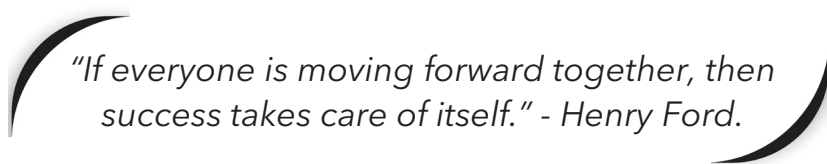
Can the staff not have their own set of priorities?

This mismatch cannot be overcome. It is the most typical case of looking at London and talking about Tokyo.

- Are the rules of the game defined?
- Is a proper Performance Management System employed?
- Are Key Result Areas and Key Performance Indicators set in advance?
- Is the staff's vision merged with that of the business?
- Is there a proper, documented appraisal system in place?
- Are expectations documented between the owner and the staff?
- Are they linked with payments? Is it measured and tracked?

Prakash and many such business owners feel such systems are of no use to them. These are for big business houses and corporations only. They cannot use them for their business. Such mental blocks thwart them from growing their business to its full potential.

Having such clarity promotes a healthy work culture. It creates an environment that promotes commitment to professionalism. And this culture at work bears fruit both - outside as well as inside the work area.



Activity 7

- Do you have a true vision statement?

- Is your staff's vision similar to yours?

- Do you have the rules of the game defined between you and your staff?

- What is the value of your staff if they leave and approach your competitor or start something by themselves?

- Are there documented Key Result Areas(KRA) and Key Performance Indicators(KPI) conveyed to your staff?

- Are the KPI and KRA linked with the remuneration and growth of the staff?

- Besides money, what is the reason one works with you? Besides money, what is the reason one can leave and go to work elsewhere?

Chapter 8

The Finicky Perfectionist

Jayshree has an aesthetic for jewellery. She has etched out her business of jewellery making with her sheer dedication to quality. It is through her passion and creativity that people acknowledge her as a jeweller of a kind.

With her growing business, Jayshree now needs an assistant. Someone to help her with the daily business tasks. Being in the high-ticket business, she is very particular in everything

she does. Jayshree has to keep minute details of her designs, her customers, and her sales. She also has to take care of her inventory to the minutest of details. She trusts her staff. To run the show, she pays a lot of attention to the details in creating her art. She has an absolute no-nonsense policy.

There is no harm in having these expectations.

Her good intentions and micromanaging skills have increased her business profits. And also boosted her team and business. Yet, her micromanaging nature impacts her team's ability. It stops the designers from developing their own strong ownership and responsibility.

When is it good to micromanage?

Business owners, when they micromanage, have the best intentions behind their actions. There are advantages to micromanagement. Here are some positive outcomes of micromanaging business:

- The employees get involved at a high engagement level
- There is greater control over the execution of business plans.
- Owners remain in charge of business-critical tasks
- They keep a close eye on important clients. This helps avoid any adversity before it happens.

Every business owner ensures that things are in order and business runs smoothly. And in doing so, they not only teach the art of running a business but also become a mentor to their employees. They have the necessary skills to get the best out

of them. They have a clearer understanding of the work. They empathise with other people and understand their strengths, weaknesses, and skill sets. They use this knowledge to gauge when to push or take a step back.

What are the disadvantages of micromanaging?

Every coin has a flip side. A micromanager tends to spend more time managing and following up on the nitty-gritty. In doing so, they tend to spend more time micromanaging, thus losing productive time. There is a very thin line between investing in and wasting time. The amount of time spent in micromanaging outweighs investing in Business Development.

- Whose job is it to develop business plans?
- Who is in charge of pursuing clients?
- Who will study new markets?
- Who will find new ways to create customers' curiosity?

No business owner can afford to be judicious about the slipping time. The time lost in micro-managing versus the opportunity cost is much higher. The perceived value of perfection is far more than the reality of it.

Micromanaging and ignoring the bigger picture is a very costly affair.

Every employee has a very basic need for job satisfaction. When they are micromanaged, and their obvious signs of discomfort are overlooked, they quit.

Employees quit when job satisfaction is missing.

When you hire a resource, you invest your time and effort in

training them. And when they leave, this investment in training them evaporates along with them.

The stakes are high!

Can a smart business owner afford this, an employee with diminishing creativity and efficiency? Would you want to hold back someone who is not motivated enough? A demotivated employee due to lack of job satisfaction? Would you want to part ways with them? Or polish their skills by providing the right infrastructure, environment, and ecosystem?

What can a smart businessman do to avoid the micromanaging trap?

It is okay to micromanage as and when required, but not at every step. Let there be an environment of co-owning tasks.

- Communicate the bigger picture with your employees.
- Set clear expectations.

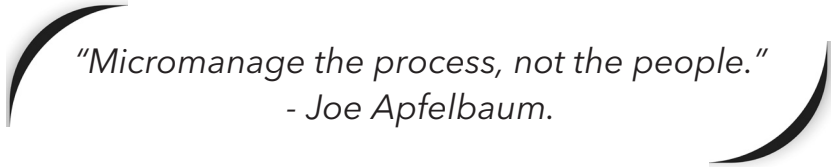
This helps ensure that employees can converge at a common point. And efforts will streamline towards a unified direction.

Do not rush towards setting the end objective only. Rather, make them define the path, and plan to achieve their goals.

Do not overdo the need for perfection. Help and guide them in achieving the end results by keeping the big picture always in their view. Make them feel a part of the big plan. And do so genuinely.

Keep checking whether you are in the habit of always criticising people's style of work. Make an effort to understand, acknowledge and work around the gap. Give them feedback

instead of giving criticism. Praise in public; pull-up in private. Always draw a line between perfectionism and pragmatism.



*"Micromanage the process, not the people."
- Joe Apfelbaum.*

Activity 8

- What is your clearly defined big picture about your business?

- Is this big picture clear to your employees too? If yes, do you see the proof of it in action? If not, what do you propose to convert this big picture into action?

- What system can you introduce to distance yourself from micromanaging?

- What is your staff's definition of micromanaging? How will you find it out?

- Do you feel that your employees cannot do anything right without your supervision? What steps will you take to change this?

Chapter 9

Rowing The Boat Without Any Oars

Recently I got a chance to interact with Mona, our Chocolatier. We sat down to chat over a fine cup of coffee. Amongst other things, I asked her how she gets new customers. And she smiled and said, “Oh, that is so simple; customers have been coming by word of mouth.” I have never needed any other publicity. The business has been blissful.

Alas, that was not to be and the pandemic changed the dynamic of her business.

Have you ever come across this mouth that speaks about your business? I am not challenging the possibility of having a robust word-of-mouth strategy. I wonder if this is the world's oldest strategy called 'hope'.

But, one strategy of relying on hope; how instrumental will that be?

I have ample reasons to say that hope is not a strategy.

- There is no word-of-mouth till you don't put the word in the mouth and make the mouth speak.
- No customer will spread this word-of-mouth on their own until you, as a business owner, improvise it.
- Give them reasons and the motivation to be that instrument.
- Connect with prospective customers and market your services on your behalf.

Now, you can hope for business to happen. And now call it word of mouth and you can relax and watch your business grow.

A lot can be spoken about the importance of marketing. Evidence in the market reveals how marketing brings new customers.

- But were those customers brought or bought? If they were bought, then, at what price?
- What is the calculation of Return on Investment?

- And does it justify the Cost Of Acquiring these customers to a lifetime value of the customer?
- Should a marketing budget be set?

As a business coach, I try not to ask one of the most horrifying questions to a business owner. Ask him what his marketing budget is, and they shy away from answering it. Not surprised. Most business owners don't have a business plan in the first place! No business plan means no marketing plan, which means no marketing budget.

Budgeting means properly calculating, setting and managing marketing expenses.

Proper thought, tests and measures should be put to define, develop and execute marketing strategies.

- Set clear marketing goals on expectations from each marketing strategy and tie it with measurable ROI and Cost Of Acquisition of a customer.
- Set a marketing budget wisely, and understand how to spend effectively. Budgeting should be done frequently and kept track of every frequently.

The most common mistake to be avoided is to make decisions based on impulses without relying on data. Gather, analyse and study data for a pattern and then invest in marketing. Most importantly, the marketing budget is not all about money. Budgeting should involve a monetary budget, time budget, tracking of efforts alongside the quality of results, efforts put in by all, and the possibility of pre-calculated results generated from it.


So what when you don't have enough money for marketing? Does it mean that you do not do any marketing, or does it mean that you go back to the hope strategy? No, you put together strategies that can be executed at the cost of zero or nearly zero.

Marketing is not about getting business. It is not for survival. Marketing is to leverage. It does not get you sales; it helps you create awareness about your business which may or may not get you sales. So, why market? The key part is that marketing is not done on impulses. It should be done with calculations. And once you invest in marketing, then every penny is tracked and spent for an assured return.


I often hear this when I ask how much did you recover from the marketing drive? The answer is "enough to recover marketing costs". My heart goes out to the business owner on such a note. Why spend money when you barely recovered the expenses? One might not spend at all. It is like saying - that you are doing your business marketing with the sole purpose of feeding someone else's business.

As a simple rule of thumb, if one does not get ten times the cost of marketing back, then one might as well not do it in the first place.

Calculate the cost of marketing, multiply it by ten (at least) to arrive at the 'Cost of Acquisition' of the customer, spread it over the average lifetime value of the customer - and if these three figures bring dollars to your eyes, go ahead and make a deep dive.



*'Stopping advertising to save money is
like stopping your watch
to save time.' - Henry Ford.*



Activity 9

Identify at least 3 new methods of acquiring new customers into your business. Ask yourself the following questions for each strategy that you can think of.

- Marketing Cost:
Is this Marketing, Branding or Sales?

- How many customers do you expect from this strategy?

- How much business will these customers get you in one year?

- What is the cost of acquisition?

- How will you ensure that your marketing effort does not go to waste?

Chapter 10

The Art Of Fine Balance

Tanya loved her morning walks; long and quiet. She would walk along the beach with no contact from the world, no watch, no phone. She somehow liked to be by herself, aimless and wandering with no care for the world. There were times when she spent hours without noticing it. Tanya ran her family business ‘from kitchen to your dining table’, a food chain that catered to young, first time employees

living away from home. Their business included packing fresh breakfast before people left for work and a packed meal for the office. All of this required timeliness and quick work during the week.

Tanya loved her business as much as she loved her morning ritual of walking by the beach. The morning breeze, soothed her and prepared her for the day. But losing track of time was equivalent to losing her business. It was a clarion call for her to manage her me-time and her business needs. It was time to learn the art of fine balance.

Is it about managing time or managing yourself?

To my mind, no one can manage time. What needs management is 'the self'. It is about prioritising certain things over others at any given time. And, to manage time well, it is a good idea to follow some kind of guidelines:

- Have a regime to set goals, and set them accordingly
- Prioritise your goals; break them into tasks
- Set a time limit to avoid burnout
- Take breaks between tasks
- Organise yourself
- Remove non-essential tasks
- Plan ahead of the day

Time management is doing things that you want to do, when you can do and when you are best able to do them. To reach such a stage of check over time (and how others use your time) calls for planning, discipline and brutal honesty with self.

This is the most precious resource that cannot be reclaimed. Entrepreneurs spend their money wisely and should spend time even more cautiously. But given the age of digital overdose and overwhelming media exposure, focussing on time is soon becoming a rarity. If one wishes to make good use of time, it just cannot happen overnight.

If you cannot measure how you spend your time, how will you manage your time? And if you cannot manage your time well, how will you make optimum use of it?

- If you wish to make good use of your time, you have to manage it well.
- And to manage it, you first need to know where your time goes.
- How much time goes into which activity?
- Do you get pleasure in the time you spend there, or do you do it out of habit or out of compulsion?

One needs to know the difference between urgent and important, not in abstract terms but rather in concrete terms.

In Chapter 4, we saw Taher juggling with his time and in Activity 4, we learned to calculate the value of one hour of our time. Now, let us identify some ways how we can make good value out of our time:

1. Set goals correctly

Set goals that are achievable and measurable. Use the SMART method when setting goals. In essence, make sure your goals are Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant, and **T**imely.

2. Prioritise wisely

Prioritise tasks based on importance and urgency. For example, look at your daily tasks and determine which are:

- Important and urgent: Do these tasks right away.
- Important but not urgent: Decide when to do these tasks.
- Urgent but not important: Delegate these tasks if possible.
- Not urgent and not important: Set these aside to do later.

3. Set a time limit to complete a task

Setting time constraints for completing tasks helps you be more focused and efficient. Making the small extra effort to decide on how much time you need to allot for each task can also help you recognise potential problems before they arise. That way, you can make plans for dealing with them.

4. Take a break between tasks

When doing a lot of tasks without a break, it is harder to stay focused and motivated. Allow some downtime between tasks to clear your head and refresh yourself. Consider grabbing a brief nap, going for a short walk, or meditating.

5. Organise yourself

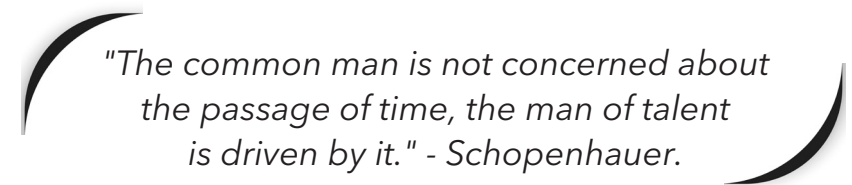
Utilise your calendar for more long-term time management. Write down the deadlines for projects or for tasks that are part of completing the overall project. Think about which days or time pockets might be best to dedicate to specific tasks.

6. Remove non-essential tasks and /or activities

It is important to remove excess activities or tasks. Determine what is significant and what deserves your time. Removing non-essential tasks/activities frees up more of your time to be spent on genuinely important things.

7. Plan ahead

Make sure you start every day with a clear idea of what you need to do – what needs to get done on that day. Consider making it a habit to, at the end of each workday, go ahead and write out your to-do list for the next workday. That way, you can hit the ground running the next morning.



To read more on Time Management, refer to *The Eisenhower Matrix* by Sapere Tool.

Activity 10

- Let's assume that you are already good at managing your time. How will you improve your time utilisation by 30%?

- Make a list of all the tasks that you want to accomplish in the next month, then next week and then tomorrow.

- Can you compartmentalise the list above into the four Eisenhower Matrix - viz.

Do - Do this as soon as possible.

Schedule - Schedule this in your day plan.

Delegate - Delegate this to another person.

Limit - How often do you do this, and can you reduce this?

- What are the top three most irritating tasks (in terms of money and pleasure) in your routine business?

- Where will you place these tasks in the Eisenhower Matrix?

Chapter 11

A Blurred Vision Sees No Image

Let me break this to you bluntly; one thing that most smart business owners forget, rather, is something that the educational institutes forget to teach. In fact, the schools too forget to teach Brian Tracy's book, *The Psychology of Sales*.

Every business owner is a salesman by default. No exceptions. And one must not forget to read the book, *The Psychology of Sales*. While I may not share all the details about the book

here, I am sharing the anecdote of a seven digit phone number. There was a town which had seven digits in their phone numbers. There were some people who could dial and get through to the second party they wanted to connect with. At the same time, there were others who were struggling to dial and get through to their connections. The reason? The second group of people were dialling seven digits - but not in the correct sequence. And in some cases, they were not even dialling these seven digits. They would dial one or two digits and hope the call would get through and get disappointed when it would not.

Is that not funny?

For successful selling, follow the seven-digit phone number. And dial each digit in a prescribed sequence for a predictable outcome. Performance and effectiveness in each of these seven digits determine the overall success and the height of income generation.

These seven digits are:

1. Target the correct prospects and build rapport with them
2. Identify their needs
3. Present to them your solution or service
4. Address their objections
5. Close the sale
6. Get repeat business from them
7. Ask for referrals

As Brian Tracy puts it in his book, 'Your self-concept in each of these seven areas determines your sales performance, as well as your overall income level.'

Fortunately, anyone who is good in any one of these areas was once poor at it. Every professional in the top ten percent started from the bottom ten percent.

The good news is:

- If you can drive a car or operate a cell phone, you can excel in each of these seven critical skills. It is simply a matter of learning and practice.
- If you have a poor self-concept with regard to any particular sales activity, you will avoid that activity whenever possible.
- The only reason that you fear taking action in a particular skill area is that you are not good at it yet. You have not yet mastered the skill.
- If you are not good at something, you will make mistakes. You will feel awkward, angry and frustrated. It would be normal and natural for you to avoid that activity.
- If you think creativity is only for the artist, you are absolutely wrong.

If you have a sales speech, you will lose your client.

Like the author Brian Tracy, I, too, learned this the hard way. Creativity in sales is being able to explain complex things in a simple manner. You may choose to:

- Lose sight of impressing your client with your product's language that you feel comfortable with
- Lose sight of complicated jargon
- Lose sight of fancy acronyms and what-not

Instead, you may choose to explain it in a manner conducive to your client. In this choose how to:

- Work towards building relationships with your clients
- Work towards organising sales demonstrations for your clients
- Work towards customer success

Creativity is not reinventing the wheel. It is to:

- Use your mind to solve problems
- Use your resources to apply solutions
- Use your will to do what is right

The essence of creativity lies in creation. Suppose you want to see where others do not see anything. Think with your heart.

Wake up to a new reality of business process and business progress.

"The person we believe ourselves to be will always act in a manner consistent with our self-image."- Brian Tracy.

Activity 11

- Please take a moment with yourself to determine what is the level of relationship you have with your clients.

- Where do you see yourself in achieving your client's success?

- Are you following the seven digit phone number mentioned in this chapter in your business? Is there any point where there is room for improvement?

- What creativity or innovation will you bring to your process to improve sales?

Chapter 12

Who Is On The Wheels

Nikhil, whom we met in Chapter 5, is a known name in the manufacturing industry of swimwear. He takes a personal interest in what each stakeholder does on a daily basis. Being a perfectionist to the hilt, Nikhil engages personally in all matters of his business. In a matter of time, he began to feel the pressure. Keeping up at all levels, at all times, was never easy for anyone. Soon things began to

slip out of his hands. Like a juggler, he was keeping his eyes and hands engaged, trying to save each ball from falling. This definitely wasn't a practical idea and began to tell on his health and eventually, business dwindled.

Nikhil was losing his focus, confidence and sight on his capabilities to run his business. He began to stay longer yet unproductive at the office. Missing deadlines and getting angry at his employees was an everyday thing at work.

He wanted to find the solution to his current state but ended up finding faults in others. His motivation was at an all time low.

How does one determine whether they are currently motivated or not?

It's a deep question with a simple answer.

One feels bored, aimless, low on energy and plain demotivated. Instead of taking an interest in growing their business, a lot of time is spent away in everyday monotonous, low-energy, low-return, low-fun activities. Not one of these promotes a healthy business prospect. All of this leads to a poorer outcome than the capability of the business owner. This marks a state of lack of perspective and direction. Worse still, this is a situation of helplessness and grumpiness' blaming others for non-performing businesses. No ownership of the state of affairs.

And what happens when business owners become directionless and helpless in their current state of affairs?

There is no smartness in business. It is just another business owner in the 94% of the world; the strugglers and complaining

to the whole world about their current situation. Unstable finances and waning dreams are far-fetched from reality.

This reflects in work, family relations, collective dreams, and business.

This business owner, who once was the hero of his movie, is now sitting in the audience, watching the movie. The sad part is that during the course of watching the movie, the theme changes from an action thriller to the melancholy of a documentary. Theatrically speaking, our hero, the creator, turns out to be the terminator of his own business.

And what is the weapon of mass destruction?

It is pure neglect.

How does one mitigate this?

Before we attempt this question, let us ask why did this situation come about?

- Do we wish to pin all the blame on the market dynamics alone?
- Or somewhere, the energy of the business person evaporated along the journey?

Every so often, a business person must revisit his vision for himself, his family and his business from a ten year lens, then arrive at a five year, three year lens and then tie it to a one year lens.

At the end of every quarter, I, as a business coach, hold a workshop for business owners to come together and revisit their ten years, five year, three year and one year plans. And,

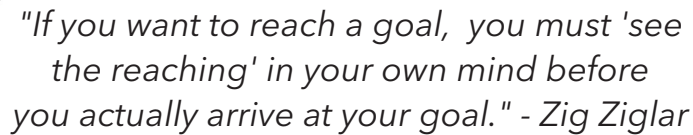
keeping that in focus, I bring them around to sharpen their focus for the next quarter.

What steps should one take in the next quarter so as to contribute to the year's focus?

And once this alignment is set in motion, the motivation sets into the day-to-day work.

Every morning business owners learn to take necessary steps, 'the grow-my-business tasks' to work towards achieving quarterly targets. This sets the pace, quarter after quarter, and ensures targets, and this consistent motivation helps the business grow. In turn, the business helps business owners fulfil their dreams and achieve projected targets.

There are many tools available to help a business person stay motivated and focused. The question remains, are they taking action?



"If you want to reach a goal, you must 'see the reaching' in your own mind before you actually arrive at your goal." - Zig Ziglar

Activity 12

- Do you have a mentor who keeps you motivated? What do you like in your mentor? What is in the mentor's approach that is missing in you currently?

- Have you set goals for yourself with a timeline to achieve them? And do you see/read/visit these goals on a day-to-day basis?

- If not, how do you keep yourself aligned with your goals?

- If yes, how does this help you?

Chapter 13

Lazy In Bed

Do you run sprints and marathons in bed? Not possible, right? A bed is a place to retire at the end of the day, to relax and rejuvenate, to face a whole new day.

Have you ever thought of it in any other way?

Imagine yourself returning home after a long tiring day at work and hitting the bed straight on. Five minutes later, a colleague calls you to do something important but not

urgent enough. Would you rise from the bed to do it? No. You would rather wait for another day and do it then. Why so? Do you understand the repercussions of delaying something important? You do. Your bed will hold you in that comfortable moment.

What are the symptoms of the 'BED' mode?

The word BED here is an acronym for the justifications we use to run away from situations. And the situation that we are running away from, in this context, is our own business prospect. Over the years, we tend to develop an attitude that pulls us back into the lazy bed.

The first syndrome is Denial. Business owners have no idea how this syndrome has a vice-like grip on them, their customers or their business. When in denial, the mind refuses to accept the fact that something is wrong and refuses to accept that it could be destroying businesses. Denial is detrimental to business. It seeps into the mindset slowly yet surely.

I have observed that many business owners get into denial mode whenever they have to change their business practices but seldom do. They turn a blind eye to their challenges and refuse to accept what they are feeling.

As luck would have it, the human brain thinks it is best to avoid challenges instead of facing them head on. And when you don't face challenges, you cannot step out of your current state of affairs, and you keep caught in this vicious cycle of denial. Denial not only kills businesses by distancing their customers, but it also ignores competition. It also suffocates the need to research business strategies and stay ahead of its competition.

An excuse is a clumsy little devil playing in mind. For every failure or slippage, the mind wants to throw reasons why it failed. It will throw up excuses. Like, I was late to the meeting today because I did not know the time and venue in advance. Though it does sound logical, this is the exact spot where it begins to seep in. We started showing excuses why we did not turn up for the meeting on time. And the result? We end up looking clumsy.

What do you think is the stand of a business owner who looks clumsy at this stage?

The ugly cousin of Denial and Excuse is the Blame syndrome. The mind keeps looking for people and situations to blame when a business owner fails or falters in a given situation or condition. This happens when the mind refuses to accept failure and resorts to blaming situations outside one's control or circle of influence.

Having seen how Blame-Excuse-Denial pulls a progressive business owner into its trap, pins him down and holds him there. Drains all the energy and motivation levels to a new low.

The next obvious question is, 'How to come out of this BED mode?'

Coming out of this BED mode is easy. As easy as a step which is, 'Determination' Be determined so as not to be in this mode. And for this, one must learn to talk to oneself and avoid getting into this mode. Become aware of your reactions, and rather use this chance to respond instead of reacting. Instead of denying, putting up excuses or blaming, first, talk to yourself, and accept that you are "about" to create a BED situation.

Make full acceptance to one's own self that it will not happen again, and take full responsibility for it.

Opposite the BED mode is the OAR mode. Imagine you are in a boat and have a pair of oars with you. Would you be stranded in the waters, or would you be able to row your boat to safety?

OAR is a metaphor for Ownership, Accountability and Responsibility. When in the OAR mode, one tends to be full of enthusiasm and positivity in the same situation, which otherwise was BED; Blame-Excuse-Denial. Here, one takes ownership of his role in a given situation, responds in that situation and takes accountability for it.

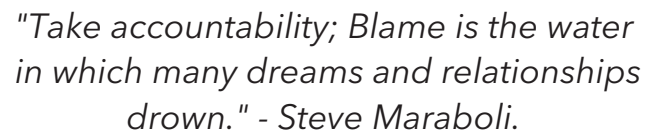
Take an example of going late to a business meeting. When you have a flat tyre, you reach late for the meeting and start with an excuse, and get demotivated with the drop in energy.

On the other hand, when you are in OAR mode, you will first accept that you started "on time" and will try to leave early the next time. When you have a flat tyre, you will park the car aside, maybe make a phone call to the other stakeholders immediately, inform them and propose a revised time. Maybe say that you will be ten minutes late if that matches with others' schedules. And then you will dash off to the meeting using some public transport or arrange for local help to solve the car tyre problem. In such a situation, when you reach the meeting, you don't go with your shoulders sagging down. Rather, you walk in a proper posture and are received well too.

Imagine if you had a business meeting to attend and reached the venue in BED mode. What would the outcome of the meeting be? And if you entered the meeting in OAR mode?

The situation remains the same, the ways to respond to it change and that is what the customers or stakeholders in the meeting would remember.

Such is the power of OAR mode, as well as the BED mode.



"Take accountability; Blame is the water in which many dreams and relationships drown." - Steve Maraboli.

Activity 13

- Do you find yourself (or your team) in the BED mode?

- According to you, what is the reason for procrastination?
Is it Perfectionism, Fear of Failure, Fear of Criticism,
Avoidance, or lack of focus?

- Would you be willing to commit yourself to operate in
the OAR mode only?

- What steps will you take to remind yourself to be in the
OAR mode at all times?

Chapter 14

A Blunt Saw Cuts No Wood

We all love to hear stories; let me share an age-old one.
A wise man walks into a jungle and sees another man
sawing a tree.

“What are you doing?” the wise man asked.

“I am sawing this tree,” said the man.

“Since when?” asked the wise man.

“Since the last three hours,” said the tired-looking man.

“Why don’t you sharpen your saw?” suggested the wise man.

“No, I cannot; I am too busy sawing this tree.” says the man.

Take a moment to ponder over this story.

- Do you feel sorry for the young man and his strange behaviour?
- Can you imagine him all worked up, tired, and devoid of energy?
- What is his understanding of his own business style?
- Can you imagine his business as healthy or blunt as his saw?

But you must also notice that the young man, when he started with his trade of sawing down trees, was very efficient. He would pull down the trees pretty fast. But obviously, because his saw was sharp then as he had just started it out. Rather, his saw was sharp enough “at that moment in time”. But, with the passage of time, his saw became blunt. He had used it enough and now was the time to sharpen it to continue his work as efficiently.

A business owner in today’s time does not forget, nor can he afford to forget, to keep himself updated at all times. He is smart because he is ahead of his competition. Not only that, he is smart because he is ahead of himself.

One must keep track of developments in the market and research along the way to progress with the times. A smart business owner will always keep himself updated. He never

puts his guard down. He may not master the craft, but he definitely is a better version of himself than the previous day.

I recall one dentist in my locality who was quite popular in the neighbourhood. He was thorough when it came to tooth and toothache. And I remember that the queue movement at his chambers was the fastest. People would come to him from near and adjacent and seek his consultation. He would invite them to the dentist's chair, peep into their mouths and paste the cavity in the tooth with some cotton wrapped in clove and mint oils. He would be done in less than ten minutes. And would call the patient again for a consult in the next fortnight. And this would go on and on till around three months when he would announce that the tooth needed to be pulled out.

I am not a dentist to comment on his style of working. But I do see a pattern. While other dentists in the market tend to the problematic tooth, clean, scrape and drill cavities in it, and if needed, do a root canal procedure. And save the tooth as far as practically possible. I doubt whether my dentist friend in question ever performed a root canal procedure. Surely, he must have his own school of thought for doing or not doing it a particular way. But I wish to draw attention to his same old dingy clinic, old creaking chair, same old tools and same old methods.

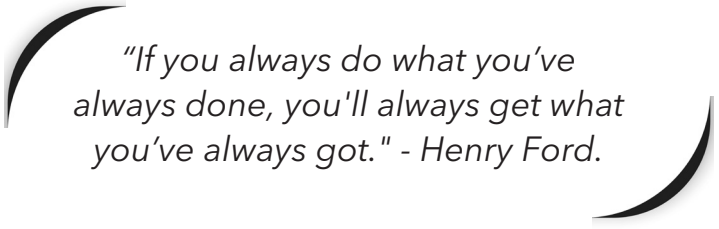
What do you think is the standing of his business?

Obviously, our dentist forgot to change with time. He did not find it important to upgrade. Neither his processes, his skill, his clinic and nor his attitude towards dental care.

A smart business owner considers sharpening his skills at different levels. He keeps his mind, body, heart and soul always well oiled. He likes to spend his time well and draws a balance in all aspects of his life. A smart business owner never forgets that “Learning Never Stops.”

How does one step out of the “blunt saw” syndrome?

- Discipline and accountability. Maintaining a daily journal of activities and revisiting it to check the pattern the data presents.
- Having a vision board which you keep frequently revisiting is preferable at a timely interval.
- Develop the habit of planning for the year and every quarter to maintain alignment with the vision.
- And get a support system with the help of a coach, friends or family or systems to keep accountability for the vision, plan and actions.



“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.” - Henry Ford.

Activity 14

- What do you do to keep yourself:
Physically Fit -
Mentally Fit -
Emotionally Fit -
Spiritually Fit -

- What do you propose to do in the next quarter to move ahead of yourself in your industry?

- How will you keep moving ahead of yourself every month, quarter and year?

- How will you evaluate your personal growth and ensure that it happens on a regular note?

CHAPTER 15

Set Your Sails With The Wind

What happens when you are afraid of competition?

When competition is a yardstick to position a business in the market, it is motivating. If you are undermined by competition and buckle under trending pressures instead of leveraging it, this may become daunting.

A smart business owner cannot afford to be daunted by the trends.

Oftentimes, people address competition by lowering their profit margins. Discounting is the last thing a business needs to override competition. In fact, if one starts discounting prices to address competition, their competitor would do the same to counter competition. Is that a win-win strategy for business? Won't that pull you inside a vicious circle, an endless loop?

Such strategies never work in the long run. They ruin the market, business and individual morale too.

What a smart business person never forgets is that his customer not only buys his goods and services but also visits him for the experience and value that the business owner adds to it in his inimitable style.

Leverage yourself with the competition and climb up the value chain in the eyes of your customers.

Competition reminds you to look into your strategic foothold. If you do not look at them within a timeframe, perhaps you may get lost in the outside noise.

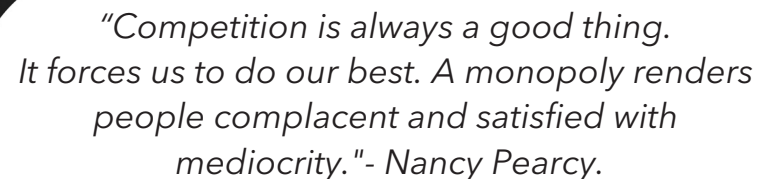
Undermining the competition is detrimental. The reason for ignoring competition is simple; either one is overconfident or frightened such that one evades the very thought of it. It's like you see the fire in the mountain and you don't do anything about it. You might not be alone enough to douse the fire. But you sure can take precautions for the safety of your business rather than let it go up in flames.

How can you stand away from the competition?

Half the battle is won when you are aware of where you stand in the market. Make it a regular practice to:

- Observe who is one step ahead of you in the competition
- Observe who is one step behind you in the competition
- Calibrate it well, and come to the awareness that if you do not act now, you will slip one step below and the one behind you today will surpass you in competition tomorrow.
- Observe, how is the one ahead of you different from you? Why do customers go to him and not you? Once you come to this awareness, bridge it by adding value to your products and services. Remember that your focus is not to align with the one ahead; rather, it is to overtake them.

Competition is not bad, but the fear of competition is: Competition can be both motivating and destroying.



"Competition is always a good thing. It forces us to do our best. A monopoly renders people complacent and satisfied with mediocrity." - Nancy Percy.

Activity 15

- Do you know where your one-step-ahead competitor stands in the market? What is the distinguishing factor?

- Do you know where your one-step-behind competitor stands in the market? What is the distinguishing factor?

- What process will you introduce in your business to ensure that you do not slip one step down (and your one-step-behind competitor does not overtake you)?

- What will you do differently to overtake your one-step-ahead competitor? What value addition will you provide that your competitor cannot?

CHAPTER 16

What Isn't Seen Isn't Sold

Mona has seen her fair share of ups and downs in her business, more so in the last three years. Running her business purely through word of mouth with no publicity during a pandemic has been a rollercoaster ride for her. Her chocolates were every palette's delight and whoever tasted them would invariably talk about them, gift them and even promote them. She relied purely on this sole channel of

marketing; word of mouth. With changing times, she had nothing ready to sync with the changing times. Her and her products' visibility had blurred. No footfall, no word of mouth, no aroma to attract, no sales strategy, no business.

How would you sell something that is not seen?

If you have read the first chapter, 'The Shop With A Single Door', then I assume you are of the opinion that Mona should make some effort in marketing her goods if she hopes for old and new customers to come to her.

Before we go ahead with helping Mona in her marketing efforts, let us simplify our understanding of marketing, branding and sales.

Marketing is letting prospective customers know that you are in business and that you are looking forward to doing business with them.

Branding is making your customer remember you and that you are unique and seemingly different from your customers.

Sales is converting your product or service into cash.

Mona already has her shop in one of the best lanes of Pune on M G Road. She has invested well and is reaping the harvest of having an outlet in the best place. So:

- What can she do differently to grow her business?
- What is the purpose of marketing?
- What does Mona need now?

All she needs is:

- Inform more prospects that she is available for business in the market.
- Make her prospects know that they can approach her for services.
- Convey the prospects of her credibility that interest them.

Now, the million-dollar question is who will inform the prospects about Mona's existence, if not herself?

Marketing is informing people that you exist and are active in the business. It also translates into the fact that the more aggressive you are in marketing, the more active your business is.

On a generic note, when Mona reaches out to the market;

- What will she publicise?
- Will she tell them that she is the most popular chocolatier in town?
- How would it work if she published her menu or brochure with details and pushed it out to the prospects passing by the lane or staying within a few kilometres' radius?

I have come across many advertisements in print as well as in digital media where people go into lengthy details about their products and services. In today's date and age, do you feel it is okay to share a catalogue with these details when marketing?

Marketing is informing your customers about your capability to solve their problems and establishing that you can give

them great value addition too. It is an endeavour to connect with them in your first reach out itself. Expecting Sales from a marketing activity is futile. Do not expect sales nor push the product. All that one should do is to connect with the prospect and let them know that you exist and are fully capable of addressing their needs.

When someone comes across your advertisement and is intrigued by it, it means you have their attention. And now is the time to take the connection to the next level.

Reaching out to you and connecting with you should be a simple task. One should be reachable and approachable. After spending loads of effort on publicity and getting much needed attention, one cannot afford to lose out customers. Worse, what if these customers are educated by you but then they go to your competition because you were not in sight?

What would you suggest, Mona, in this context? Should she give a detailed address, phone number, website or QR code to guide them toward her store? Is it relevant to provide all social handles across different channels? One should make it comfortable and relevant. It is not advisable to burden or bore the prospect with information overload.

A good marketing plan begins with the right direction for the market. And then do what it takes to catch your prospect's attention and provide the wherewithal to connect with you.

- Is the marketing effort being put in the right direction?
- The magical question to ask here is, 'are you going where your customer is?'

- Are you going in the direction of the market?
- Is your marketing plan reaching out to the right set of customers?
- How would you come to know that your efforts are in the right direction and are hitting the right target?

As a sound businessman, one should look at these parameters and ensure that the cost of marketing does not go to waste.

In a marketing copy, should one just inform the prospect about the product and services? If she makes a list of her chocolate varieties and starts spreading them around, she will be seen as a product pusher. Her audience might not like that.

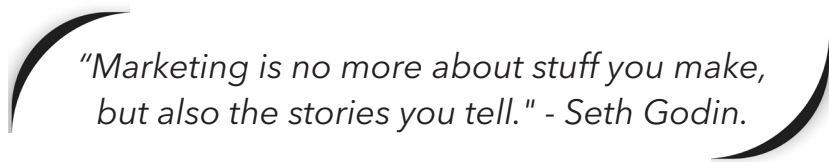
- What steps would you suggest Mona take to connect with them?
- How can she become a problem solver rather than just another product pusher?
- How do you suggest Mona should build a story to connect with the audience?

When one is in the B2B mode of business, one generally needs to connect with the prospects through the purchase managers. The most common approach is to reach out to them with emails containing the company profile and catalogue of services. Do these emails succeed in soliciting enquiries from them? The sales staff get disappointed when they get curt replies showing a lack or no interest.

In the context of B2B too, sufficient care should be taken to reach out to the audience with a 'problem solving approach

and not just a 'menu-pusher approach'. When your reader feels that your email is talking about the problem they face and you have the ability to solve them, then the reader will be interested in reading your mail further and also welcome communication from you.

If you talk about problems that they face and how you are equipped to solve those problems and provide them with pointers towards further reading, or relevant information, then you are establishing your authority in solving their problem. The story that you weave helps them connect with you. And your marketing strategy has now achieved its purpose.



"Marketing is no more about stuff you make, but also the stories you tell." - Seth Godin.

Activity 16

- What in your opinion, is Marketing and how is it different from Branding?

- What in your opinion is Selling and how is it different from Marketing?

- In your business, what will you do to achieve the best out of Marketing, Branding and Selling without mixing the three?

- What do you expect your customer to do after they have read or heard your marketing copy? Will it necessarily convert into Sales?

- What do you expect your customer to do after they have visited your Branding? Will it necessarily convert into Sales?

- Do you have a mechanism to measure your marketing efforts and track them towards Sales?

- Can you study your competitor's marketing approach and find what good they have in them?

CHAPTER 17

One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward

To persevere persistently, regularity, discipline and timeliness are the three essential elements.

A good example of perseverance would be a businessman who is in the habit of taking stock of his goods at regular intervals. Doing something regularly is soon habituated and becomes the culture or DNA of that person. When a

business person is in the thinking mode, he devises ideas and strategies to increase his sales or improve business. He has a mental map of how to accomplish them. If he follows this map with due practicality, he achieves his plan. And when he does not translate his mental map to execute it thoroughly and completely, it is then he starts becoming lazy and lets this laziness seep into and overpower his mental map. Thus losing focus and perseverance in implementing strategies for growth and success.

When this happens, he enters into the B.E.D zone and starts blaming others, putting up excuses and denying his own inefficacy to get up, thereby leading to negative performance. And the worst part is that when one is not persevering enough, one tends to lose confidence in himself.

When the mind is ready to do something, it plans for it. And when one acts on it repeatedly, regularly and consistently, it is perseverance. And when one starts with planning and execution and leaves it midway without even being aware, it creates a dent in perseverance and the lack of it.

How does one identify a lack of perseverance? It is rather a tricky question if you approach it that way. But if you look at it closely, it is rather simple to approach. Possibilities happen only with repeated dedicated efforts. Lack of perseverance is when your levels of dedication go down or when you find yourself drifting away from it. A lack of perseverance is linked to a lack of motivation. And with lack of hunger and lack of motivation, you end up with no discipline despite having planned well and in detail.

There are many ways to improve your motivation and discipline. You can achieve it by writing or drawing a dream board. If you want to develop a marketing strategy for your business that requires many steps, chances are you may abandon it mid-way.

For that reason, create a large dashboard or dream board and put it up in such a place that you can look at it many times every day. This dream board will talk about multiple things besides road-maps of success. It would also bring you visible joy in accomplishing these tasks. It also helps keep focus and motivation high.

- Make a plan of action and the necessary steps to accomplish your task.
- Give a realistic timeline and make it realistic so as not to miss out on it.
- Calculate a percentage figure for every small task and step achieved, and start measuring and monitoring the kit.

Now you have put in place a tool to keep you motivated and you have also put together a tool that calculates steps for measuring outcomes. It also informs you about the percentage of work accomplished and how much is to be done in the current week. So, now you are not looking at the entire 100% of the task, but you are looking at the visible enough list of tasks, which, once done, would bring you closer to your dream board. To avoid a lack of perseverance trap, follow these simple steps and follow them with perseverance.

"Persistence pushes me to be bold and seek out the opportunities I've wanted. It starts by envisioning what you want, no matter how big or small, and believing that you can achieve it." - Belinda Johnson.

Perseverance is persistence in sticking to a plan; a plan by itself is no good if not acted upon.

Activity 17

- What is your plan of action?

- Break your plan into smaller achievable tasks.
 - Give a realistic timeline and make it realistic so as not to miss out on it.
 - Calculate a percentage figure for every small task and step achieved, and start measuring and monitoring it._____

- Put a realistic date when you will be able to finish these small bite-size tasks.

- Give a percentage value to all your tasks and their steps. The total of all these values should arrive at 100. Maintain a scorecard for yourself, and give yourself points as and when you finish these steps. And drive this figure to 100.

CHAPTER 18

Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

What is a comfort zone?

Different people, different situations, different perspectives. So, let us approach the topic of the comfort zone from a practical angle.

To begin with, make a list of the top five business problems

that you face. When you make a list, pick those problems that make you uncomfortable and feel dissatisfied with the way your business works. Depending on how uncomfortable you are, rate it on a scale of 1 to 100, where 1 is the least and 100 is the most. Suppose my discomfort is being unorganised in my business, and I do not have a proper sales tracking system and an inconsistent cash flow. These three issues are bleeding my efficiency and impede my joy in running my business. So, I want to give these three a collective count of 99 on the dissatisfaction scale.

Let us call this the Dissatisfaction Quotient (D)

On another piece of paper, make a list of five things that you wish to see in your business. These points could be from your dream/vision board or from your to-do list. Depending on your commitment to it, give it a rating between 1 to 100. Suppose my vision is to add a new service or product to my existing business or upgrade my office, facility, or technology or up-skill myself. Depending on my intent towards any of these, I will give these a collective rating, say 75, on my vision scale.

We call this the Vision Quotient (V).

A product of the digits of Dissatisfaction Quotient and Vision Quotient ($D \times V$), in this example, $99 \times 75 = 7425$ is my spread of comfort zone.

Why is it comfortable?

Now, a business owner has a fair, if not an accurate, understanding of how to remove these obstacles or fulfil visions. A business owner is never unaware of his business.

He knows the initial steps required to resolve his problems or achieve those dreams.

Yet, a business owner does not take these steps.

So far, a business owner was not aware of the spread of his comfort zone. But now he knows that his comfort zone is 7425 units. And, given that he is aware of it, what should be done? What is stopping him from addressing it?

He already has enough discomfort and vision (7425 units). And he is not taking enough steps to overcome them. That means his comfort zone is 7425 units strong which is giving him resistance to overcoming them.

How does one come out of a comfort zone?

Coming out of your comfort zone is just one simple step. One has to put in one unit more work than that of the resistance. And what will the one unit be?

A business owner just has to chalk out the first and second steps to overcome his problem of dissatisfaction and achieve his vision drawn on the dream board. There is no other way stronger than this. Identify the steps and move towards achieving them.

Once you have taken the first step and have clarity about the second step, you have stepped out of your comfort zone. You have now learned to surf and are ready to ride the turf and enjoy it.

"Very successful people don't seek comfort; they seek success and are willing to do what is most uncomfortable. But most of the world is seeking comfort and familiarity, which are traps that cause you to settle for the mediocre. If you want to get to the next level of your business, you've got to be comfortable with being uncomfortable."
- Grant Cardone.

Activity 18

- What are the points of dissatisfaction in your business?

- What do you wish to achieve in the next ten years?

- What is the intensity of the above two? What numerical value will you give to the above two points? What is the product of the two numbers?

- What steps will you take to overcome the dissatisfaction and achieve the vision in the next ten years?

CHAPTER 19

Working In, Not On The Business

Janette started her business venture in the month of March 2019, when the world was struggling to find ways of sustaining itself. She comes from a family of tailors and needlework came naturally to her. With a Master's degree in Design, she chose to start a clothesline that was not only budget-friendly but also easy to access. It took her a lot of groundwork, networking and social media presence to get

the tiller ringing. She began with a handful of orders and today; she has more work than her two hands can handle.

She expanded her base to a warehouse; extended her range of products from ready-to-wear boutique clothes to table-wear to exquisite linen. She plans to launch her line of budget-friendly bridal wear.

It sounds like a fairytale turn true, doesn't it?

All of this did not come easy to Janette. She worked tirelessly, day and night, for two long years to reach her current state. Hers is a profit making venture and now she has over a hundred employees in her business. There is a price she had to pay for her success. She has not had a holiday or a family outing. Children are with nannies and members complain of her absence at the dinner table.

Is that a price you, my smart business owners, would like to pay for success?

Business owners, as a way of running their business, get engrossed in every day operations of their business. It is their bread-and-butter and gets food on the table. Their day-to-day tasks are so over-absorbing, and by the time they are due to think about growing their business, they have run out of steam. Even if they get time to think, they cannot focus on it.

Where is the time and energy?

Most, if not all, business owners that I have interacted with are caught up in the routine operations of the business. They get exhausted or forget to plan and work towards growing the business. The majority of their time is spent on routine

responsibilities that probably can be delegated. Their time is spent meeting with clients, answering queries, understanding their requirements, paying and raising invoices, following up with them, dealing with conflicts amongst employees and anything else. While all of these tasks are urgent and important, they qualify to be 'working in the business'.

When you set up and start a business, the goal is to make it succeed; it is never designed to fail. Failure is never a part of the business owner's plan. However, success requires planning and executing the plan. This is what most businesses lack. They fail in growing their businesses to capacity without being aware of what went wrong.

Be aware of every critical thing happening in your business so that if something goes wrong, it can be fixed quickly before it gets out of hand.

If they don't manage their time well, they don't keep the focus on growth and development. And without the much needed time to focus on innovation or growth, businesses will enter into the struggling phase.

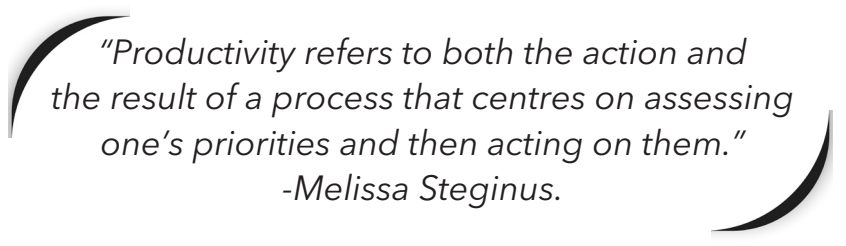
How does one achieve this?

Ideally, every business owner should invest at least one hour per day in looking at ways to move their business forward.

One hour each day invested in future planning, learning new skills, setting goals, automating processes, talking with mentors, identifying new markets, learning sales skills, etc. These tasks, when planned well and scheduled over the calendar, qualify to become 'working on the business'.

One must learn to delegate, manage time judiciously, monitor and measure key factors of the business, strive towards improving it, find what is going wrong and set it right, research assumptions, etc.

A smart business person ideally employs the 80:20 rule here. If 80% of his time goes into the business, then 20% of the time should be invested on-the-business.



"Productivity refers to both the action and the result of a process that centres on assessing one's priorities and then acting on them."

-Melissa Steginus.

Activity 19

- How will you fit the 80:20 rule in your business?

- How much time do you put into your business and how much time goes into your business?

- Can you make a schedule for one hour a day to invest in on-the-business tasks? What tasks do you wish to accomplish in the next 30 days?

- What will you do to make this 80:20 rule a regular habit in your day-to-day schedule?

CHAPTER 20

Two Sides Of The Same Coin

*People like doing business with people
who are honest and supportive
of their business interests.*

Imagine a situation when the business owner uses unfair means, power or position to get through his way. This approach may get favours for a transaction and may work in the short run. But, in the long run, the customer will sense

his devious ways and drift away. The business is never ever successful when you don't think of the other party.

Every business owner knows this success mantra by default and this is why he is successful. They know how to negotiate and this skill develops from another deep rooted habit, the habit of empathy.

Instead of thinking 'what is in it for me' in any business deal, let us look at it with a perspective of 'what is in it for us'. Every business transaction is successful when involved parties.

Before you act win-win, you have to think win-win. This happens when you develop the attitude that everyone wins in the game. To think win-win is a powerful way to shift your thinking before any interaction happens. But taking a win-win approach will be hard to achieve if you haven't built trust with others first. The willingness of others to engage with you in a win-win way is directly affected by the trust they have with you. Simple, consistent steps increase trust and make win-win easier and more likely.

Surprisingly, thirty years back, Stephen Covey, in his book "7 Habits of Highly Effective People", said that a win-win strategy is always the best strategy. And he said that a win-win situation helps to develop humility in you. If you rely on others for your success, then it creates a sense of humbleness that enables you to find a mutual benefit situation. Win-win makes both parties feel satisfied because they believe that neither of them is a winner nor a loser.

'Think Win-Win' is the belief that everyone can win. It's not them or you; it is both of you. It is a belief that there are enough

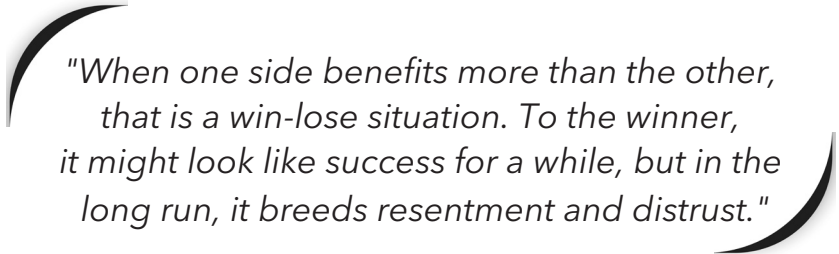
good things for everyone; it is an abundant way of thinking. Think Win-Win is being happy for others when good things happen to them.

Win-win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. Win-Win means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial and satisfying.

With a win-win solution, all parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan. This sees life as a cooperative, not a competitive arena. It is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others.

Win-win is a belief in the third alternative. It's not your way or my way; it's a better way, a higher way.

A win-win situation is a resolution in which both sides of a negotiation feel they've gotten what they want. Learning how to negotiate a win-win can help improve morale.



"When one side benefits more than the other, that is a win-lose situation. To the winner, it might look like success for a while, but in the long run, it breeds resentment and distrust."

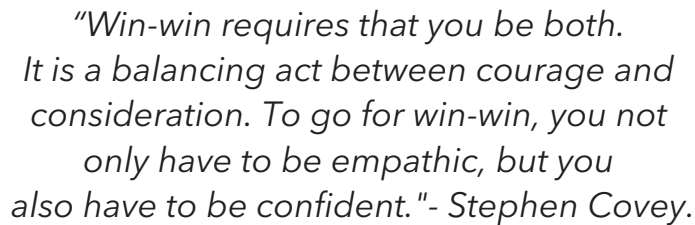
Win-win sees life as a cooperative arena, not a competitive one. Win-win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. Win-win means agreements or courses are mutually beneficial and satisfying.

Both parties eat the pie, and it tastes pretty good.

A person or organisation that approaches conflicts with a win-win attitude possesses three vital character traits:

1. Integrity: sticking with your true feelings, values, and commitments
2. Maturity: expressing your ideas and feelings with courage and consideration for the ideas and feelings of others
3. Abundance Mentality: believing there is plenty for everyone

To go for a win-win, you not only have to be empathic, but you also have to be confident. You not only have to be considerate and sensitive, but you also have to be brave. To do that--to achieve that balance between courage and consideration--is the essence of real maturity and is fundamental to win-win.



"Win-win requires that you be both. It is a balancing act between courage and consideration. To go for win-win, you not only have to be empathic, but you also have to be confident."- Stephen Covey.

Activity 20

- Can you recall some deal where you made yourself happy by sticking to your values of Integrity? Did that result in positive business for you? Did you get pleasure out of the deal (or no deal)?

- In the same example, did you find yourself behaving in a mature manner? Did you find the other person behaving mature too? How can you make a habit of enhancing the habit of behaving with courage and consideration for the other?

- Abundance Mentality is to believe that there is plenty for everyone. How do you see this happening in your deals in the past? What will you do to develop this mentality in the future?

- What small checklist can you make for yourself to develop and maintain your habit of Think WIn-Win? (Integrity, Maturity and Abundance Mentality)

CHAPTER 21

What Do Your Customers Want?

A customer has a need for our product or service or has a problem that our offerings will help him solve. And that is the reason why our customer has decided to spend money with us - or in the market with our competitors.

If we believe that is the only reason why a customer spends money - then should the opposite of it also be true? Can we assume that a customer does not buy our product or service -

because he does not have a need or a problem statement?

A businessman gets very busy in the day-to-day transactions of a business. He is so occupied in Sales, Purchase, Operations, Accounts, Finance etc., that he tends to miss out on one important component of business - Customer Success.

To study and determine what makes a “customer success” story, one needs to know that it is not an element of Sales or Support.

One tends to focus on establishing connections, discovering customers' objectives, and outlining how their services and products will enable them to accomplish their goals.

A customer, whether B2B or B2C - is a complex human being. They wish us to listen to them. Two people coming together CANNOT communicate. And in the context of a customer, communicating is largely listening to them.

The customer wants us to listen to them and understand their needs. No customer would like to select from a list of options where his need is not met. It goes against the rule of "listening" to the customer.

A customer is a king, and he expects to be treated that way. Empower your customer by giving them a choice. Customers will feel more in control when put in a decision-making position. They expect to have multiple options when dealing before they start transacting with you.

No customer walked out happy about a deal when he was kept waiting with uncertainty. A customer wants that he is responded to quickly - reasonably quick if not immediate.

The shortest way to lose customers is to treat them as one. Why lose a customer by treating them as generic customers? Rather, give every customer a small per Jayshreesed experience because that is what stays with them when they are with us and will carry along. The next time they face a need again, it is the experience they had with us which will bring them back to us.

A customer wants us to be proactive instead of reactive. Proactive communication is an important part of the Customer's Experience. It helps to facilitate his journey and inspires them to stay loyal to us. When you are proactive with your customer, it shows that you care, you value them and it gives them an insight into your work. This will build trust and help make you a brand in their eyes.

Adding a human touch and proactivity to your interactions can create miracles and turn customers into real friends and ambassadors of your brand. Give it a shot and you will be happy to hear your customer praise you in front of others.

As humans, ever since we were young children, we have loved surprises. And so do our customers. They like surprises - and they add to the Customer Experience. Satisfied customers are loyal, but appreciated customers are even more so. Surprise your customers once in a while with appreciation - something that delights them. Most people tend to enjoy surprises, just so long as they benefit from them. But when doing so, one must ensure that we do not miss out on consistency of service. Because if we miss out on consistency in delivery or experience - then it is like landing your foot on the landmine!

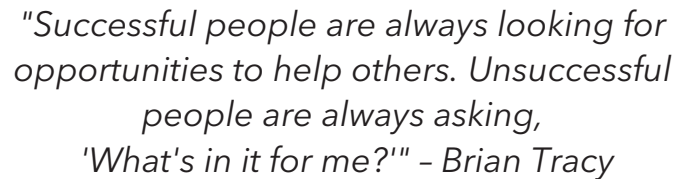
By pleasing existing or potential customers, you can encourage

them to enjoy working with you. It's an incentive for them to come back to you instead of going to your competitor.

All our systems should be aligned in such a way that they increase the customer's experience and add value to the happiness quotient, directly or indirectly.

If a business owner or the sales staff focuses on this, then there is no need to worry about selling, upselling, customer loyalty or advocacy.

One needs to question and revisit time and again what his or his team's challenges are in becoming a trusted advisor to the customers and how one can make it easier for them to take customer experience to the next level.



"Successful people are always looking for opportunities to help others. Unsuccessful people are always asking, 'What's in it for me?'" - Brian Tracy

Activity 21

- Do you know what your customer's fears are?

- How will you know if your customer is offended and leaves you without communicating with you? What will you do to avoid this situation in the first place?

- What will you do to safeguard your customer from the feeling of "being sold to" instead of "being listened to."

- What steps will you take to take your Customer Experience level one notch higher?

CHAPTER 22

Too Lonely At The Top

Amar sat in his plush office, reminiscing the day he set out to establish his business. He had been working tirelessly collaborating with his vendors, business partners and clients. It had taken him endless hours and long nights to start his production of handmade paper. Today his products are a name to reckon with. High quality, variety, customised for bulk orders and timely deliveries are some of the values he

had set for his business.

While Amar was busy setting up his business, he worked single-handedly to align coordinates. He had set his goals, had a clear vision of where he wanted to see his business grow after five years and curated the mission statement. His next step was to set up a business plan and he reached out to his friends and colleagues to help him through it.

Soon Amar was working with the sole purpose of making his business successful. He left no stone unturned. It was all about profits and growth. He did not keep in mind the human element and the need to acknowledge it. He forgot the people working with him, and for him, he had a life beyond his dream. He was becoming self-focused and totally self-centred; it was all about setting up his business empire. He was becoming distant and lonely as his business grew.

Today, when he sat enjoying his success, he felt he was too lonely at the top.

Any small to medium organisation reaches where it has reached because of the business owner sitting at the top position. As the owner and CEO, success or failure of the business operation begins and ends in your mind. But success does not entirely mean earning profits. To be a leader in the truest sense, one must strive to improve the welfare of the employees, vendors, customers, and others allied with their business. The head of an enterprise is entrusted with the responsibility of envisioning and implementing a strategy for success. Making the right decisions with a straightforward approach is not always a one-man-show.

The business owner's task includes overseeing critical tasks including managing operations, managing customers and their perceptions, managing competition, employee wellbeing, getting the right people to do the right tasks, motivation, energy centre, managing finances, keeping a tab on market dynamics, keeping an eye on research, staying in line with the trending times etc. How daunting!

A business owner who sits at the top of his business pyramid is capable of addressing all these tasks. And it is very sad if he does not have a reliable team to fall back on. Each of these tasks demands his energy and primary focus.

A business owner has human capabilities and limitations and can hold focus only for a limited time for a given task. To overburden oneself is counter productive. Everyone in the team reports to him. He demands a report and it is produced. He commands a task and it is brought to completion. And all this happens at his demand and command. It is this habit of asking and being obeyed along with the right degree and quality that the task is accomplished.

Is there an answerability on the part of the business owner; who can question how or why a business is run in a particular way?

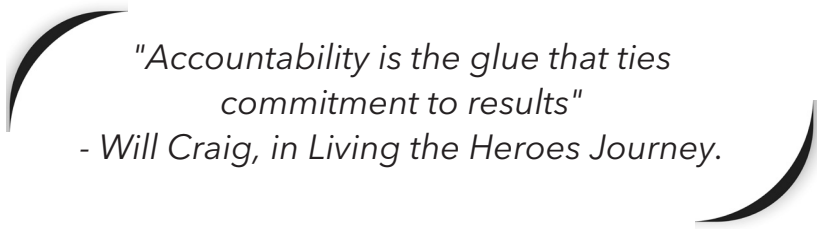
A business owner when meets fellow business owners in the industry or in his circle, and they discuss ideas, research concepts etc., but soon after, these things are put on the back burner, or worse still, they are forgotten. There is no one who holds the business owner accountable. There is no one with whom the business owner can comfortably discuss his

problems, challenges or shortcomings.

When a business owner invites a business coach to his inner circle, he gets an accountability coach who questions and holds him accountable on things necessary for business growth, which were otherwise sidelined due to lack of time and attention. The coach discusses and helps arrive at the root cause of problems and helps find a solution. He directs the business owner towards the knowledge that could help make the right decisions even in the toughest of situations.

It is always lonely at the top.

When you seek guidance and make educated moves, you can accomplish your objectives, become a better businessman, and increase profitability.



*"Accountability is the glue that ties
commitment to results"*
- Will Craig, in *Living the Heroes Journey*.

Activity 22

- How do you ensure technical, functional, financial and operational growth?

- Who serves the role of a mentor to you for your growth in business? What qualities of this person do you relate with?

- Do you hold your team accountable for in-the-business, day-to-day activities?

- Who holds you accountable for your on-the-business growth-related activities?

CHAPTER 23

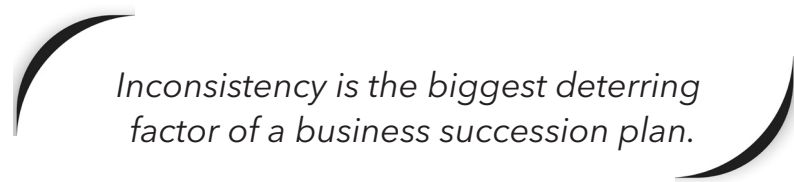
Consistently Inconsistent

When quality is delivered, customers appreciate it. Every customer likes good quality and expects consistency in it. Customers do not approve of lowering standards in business once they have got good quality services nor any gaps in promptness of delivery they have been accustomed to.

According to the buyers' psychology, customers need a few repeated and successful experiences before they openly support and promote your services to others. If consistency is disturbed, it affects their trust factor. Such is the nature of buyers' psychology. As a general rule of thumb, they want at least ten repeated and consistent positive experiences before recommending your business to others. On the other hand, just one bad episode is enough to forget the balance of nine good experiences.

- Can a smart business owner afford a single lapse in service that could cost him a regular customer?
- Can a smart business owner afford a lapse in consistency that could augur losses to his future business prospects?

What, according to smart business owners, is the role of consistency in delivery?



I recently visited a hospital a few weeks ago, and what I saw on a wall of the casualty ward was eye opening for me. There was a whiteboard hanging on the wall with some parameters captured on the whiteboard. The parameters that were captured on this board were -

- Number of days since last injection injury
- Number of days since last fall

- Number of days since last reported hand sanitisation complaint

And, the answers to these questions were captured and updated on a day-to-day basis.

What stayed with me after looking at this whiteboard was these key parameters were so critical to them that not only did the hospital authorities capture them on a day-to-day basis on the board, but they also made them visible to all the stakeholders: doctors, nurses, patients and people in general, at large.

What can we learn here from this casualty ward?

I can see the importance they place on consistency in their key critical parameters related to hygiene and avoidance of injuries in the ward. They achieved this consistency by using a very simple yet potent tool to measure and monitor key factors.

To achieve consistency -

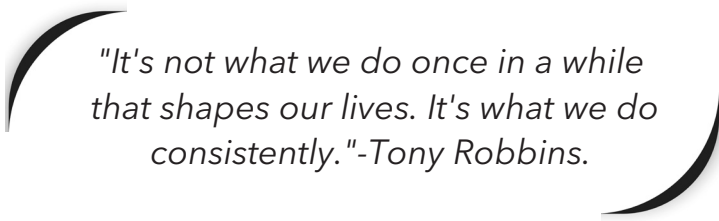
- One needs to empower their people with processes,
- train them in developing the right attitude, and empower them with the right aptitude by training them in skills and a common mindset
- to ensure that mindset is aligned at all times, with no scope for lapses.
- Introduce the right degree of processes in the form of checklists, acknowledgements and rewards.

Having a simple checklist to monitor things from the beginning to the end of the process can bring in a great degree of consistency in delivery. This is a powerful tool, yet it is

ignored. Along with making a checklist on paper, strengthen it by integrating it on the dashboard, and public display walls, showcase appraisals of staff, and, if possible, make it visible to the customers.

Can you imagine the level of consistency your team and business will deliver to your customers if the right mix of mindset, training, processes and money is implemented?

Can a smart businessman afford to miss out on consistency even after knowing the simplicity of achieving it?



"It's not what we do once in a while that shapes our lives. It's what we do consistently."-Tony Robbins.

Activity 23

- What is your Customer's Success Experience? When will your customer say that he is Satisfied, Happy, Very Happy or Excellent?

- What can you do to calibrate Satisfied, Happy, Very Happy and Excellent?

- What tracking sheets will you deploy in your business to maintain consistency across all customers?

- What will be your biggest challenge in implementing this system in your business and how will you overcome this challenge?

CHAPTER 24

Too Many Ladles Spoil The Dish

It bothers me to see how so many entrepreneurs continue to get in their own way by focusing on too many things at the same time. And when one does so, he ends up not focusing on any. Even worse, he is focussing on the unimportant things in business.

There is no reason to make success hard when it is easy.

Don't focus on what you don't know at first. Focus, instead, on what you can do and keep gaining momentum. This means focusing on the easy parts first, then moving towards the more challenging aspects of building your business. Hopefully, by then, you would have built up enough momentum that it won't break your productivity focus.

Focus on what works for easy success. Obsessing perfection or unnecessary details is not cost-effective. Learn to prioritise how much time to spend on each aspect of your business, and don't waste time on unimportant tasks.

Avoid the 'Squirrel Syndrome'. It is not uncommon for a business owner to spin their wheel and lose focus. When this happens, many people start looking for the next bright, shiny object. This is the squirrel syndrome. Squirrels have a severe inability to focus. They dart back and forth, doubting their decisions, unable to choose a direction. This may cause abrupt dashes from one idea to another or one project to the next. When this happens, you become unfocused and may even become frantic about not getting things accomplished. This results in delayed or incomplete projects.

You can avoid the squirrel syndrome by learning to recognise when a squirrel in you shows up in your life. Refocus by taking time to define the project you plan to go to. Then stay on task and turn off all distractions. Remember, every time you stray off the track, it takes that much longer to reach your goals.

Focus on activities that create results. Focus is one of those basic-but-critical habits to master if you want to be successful. Improve your focus on the day-to-day basic business activities

you do best, and produce extraordinary results. If you don't, you will end up creating higher stress levels and may experience burnout. When you spend most of your time and energy on tasks you excel in and delegate the rest; you reap the biggest harvest.

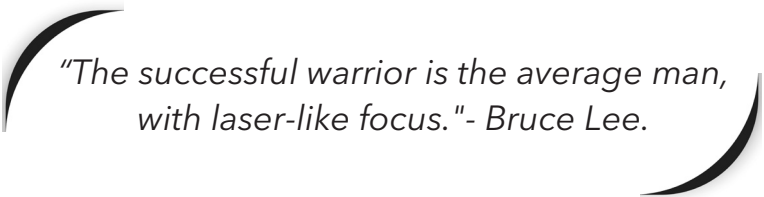
Multitask mindfully. The key to multitasking is to do it strategically and mindfully.

- Mindful multitasking means that you check in with yourself and determine how you need to focus in each situation.
- It allows you to stop reacting to distractions like answering the phone at all times or reading an incoming text just then.
- It brings focus to the actions that provide the best results and disregard everything else.
- After you set your intentions for the day, create a to-do list that you can tackle using mindful multitasking, allowing yourself to be present in each action you take for the day.

How do you overcome distractions?

As an Action Coach, I promote business owners to have weekly targets. And to accomplish them, we follow a simple mantra - limit the count of expectations and keep them meaningful.: Always one, Sometimes two, Maybe three but Never four. When you focus on a limited count of tasks, you succeed in achieving them and won't let distractions come in the way.

Always have one and only one point of action to focus on. Occasionally, there could be two points of action. But anything more than three is an assured way of losing focus.



Activity 24

- You made a priority plan in Activity 22. Break that into daily task sheets and plot them in the calendar.

- What reward awaits you when you finish all your planned tasks on time?

- What penalty will you be willing to give yourself when you fail to do what you promised to do on the calendar?

CHAPTER 25

Be The Light To Brighten Your Path

Every business owner starts his business with full inspiration and ambition. After three years of rapid growth in business and managing day-to-day operations, the initial intensity to grow subsides. They get accustomed to the routine and do not realise that their energies have gone down. Also, self-motivation can be a disorienting experience.

Mahrukh and Firdaus were winding up their day. At around 8 p.m., when they received a call from their long-time associate who wanted to discuss a business plan. Mahrukh looked at Firdaus and then at the clock above their head and nodded in negative. “It’s been a long and winding day, plus the business had been really good this season. Firdaus, let us find a way to let the business run on its own,” said Mahrukh. Firdaus was too tired to argue and agreed. Managing a business in the four metros and aligning with business partners was enough to sap their energies. Their enthusiasm to diversify or grow was anywhere in sight.

They were now accustomed to the routine and did not realise that their energies had gone down. The enthusiasm to expand was dimmed by everyday matters. No light shone on their paths anymore. They were happy in their complacency.

When one lacks enthusiasm in business, one tends to get easily overwhelmed. They get bogged down by the routine results and get deeper into routine behaviour. And then they get demotivated and lose enthusiasm again. And so the vicious cycle continues.

When a business owner lacks enthusiasm, he has no idea of what he wants. He has no purpose except to continue being in business. He easily loses control of things. This begins to reflect in his physical health and shows in his body language too. Lack of motivation, diminishing good habits, and lack of ambition makes him feel lost. He loses focus.

One tends to get into the B.E.D. trap, the ever struggling zone of Blaming others, Denying the situation and putting up

Excuses. They easily get bored of the routine and find no fun in their work. There is no spice, no variety. They don’t have an anchor either and easily let themselves drift away from work.

The symptoms of lack of motivation in business can be seen reflected in lower levels of engagement with customers, poor communication with vendors and suppliers and also the staff. A noticeably diminished productivity. These issues make the business environment a toxic environment. Can we expect growth in a toxic environment?

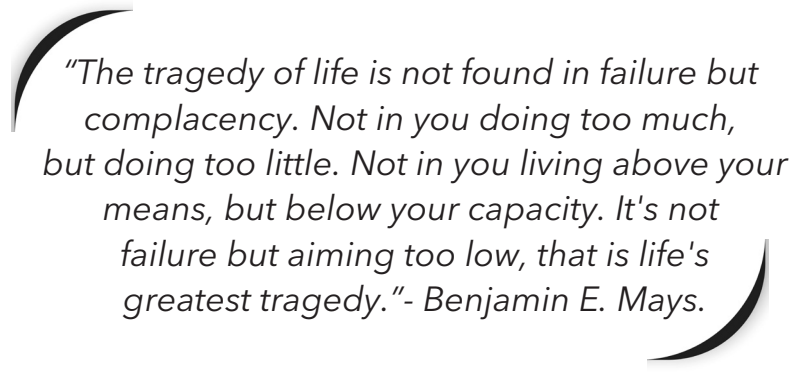
The first step to getting out of the demotivating trap is to be aware of the trap. To get out of this trap, go back to the vision and mission for which he had entered the business. Ground yourself in your truth. And tune into your values to discover a new ‘why’.

Associate with energetic and passionate people. If one is too bored of the routine, if practically possible, put someone else in charge temporarily. Try to find joy and perspective in an unrelated activity. Follow the simple mantra of SARR: Stop, Assess, Recalibrate and Realign.

Follow a routine to take care of yourself in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional fitness daily. Once this is on track, bring the energy to business.

Once the mindset is realigned and rejuvenated, it’s time to get into action. Establish a quarterly routine that converts vision from abstract to the material. Dedicate time to creating a vision board and making an actionable plan to accomplish them. The important point is not to be perfect, but rather to be particular

in doing this activity every quarter. Revisiting the vision board every quarter and planning for the next steps helps you be grounded and stay guided.



"The tragedy of life is not found in failure but complacency. Not in you doing too much, but doing too little. Not in you living above your means, but below your capacity. It's not failure but aiming too low, that is life's greatest tragedy." - Benjamin E. Mays.

Activity 25

- Recall a situation when you were very low in enthusiasm. List down the reasons for the lack of enthusiasm.

- Are you still facing those reasons?

- If not, what steps did you take to move out of it?

- If yes, what steps will you take now to move out of the demotivating trap?

- How do you feel after completing all the activities in the earlier chapters? Do you find yourself stepping out of the BED mode and getting focused?

CHAPTER 26

Serving With Style

What is the most important component of business: Service, profits, finance, plan, inventory, team management?

While all the answers are right in their own dimension, I personally feel that the most important component of the business is the customer.

Take care of your customer and your business is taken care of. You are delivering good products and services. Therefore you are in business and thriving. Is that not proof enough that you are taking care of your customers? Well, there is never a limit that can be drawn to moving the customer upwards on the loyalty ladder.

So, what more can be done to take care of your customer?

Once you sell your goods and services to a customer base, there is only so much that you can sell. You cannot sell them the same goods and services beyond a threshold. A smart business owner identifies new needs in the same customer. Your customers are with you because they trust you already. Leverage this trust and strengthen it by providing them with solutions to their unsolved problems.

A business owner has put in efforts to develop a customer base. And the customer base can grow only to an imaginable figure. To grow this figure, one does not need to reinvent the wheel. The idea is to focus on the customer's channel instead of going to a new market.

A business owner who wants to multiply his growth focuses on avenues that the existing customer base may open up. One may want to take a different approach to the same customer base and identify their unsolved problems. Find ways to align your products and services to their unmet needs.

Introspect your existing customer base and find out where the bulk of customers come from. Find out the pattern in the customer base. Where the bulk of customers come from;

qualifies to become your channel. Once you dive into your database, you can easily spot a pattern. These customers would have some common problems that you are already solving. In fact, that is the reason why they keep coming back to you and bringing their clan along. Once this pattern develops, your channel begins to emerge.

Talk to your customers, do not ask them for feedback. Because the customer has a tendency to rate between good to excellent, on a scale of 1 to 10, the majority of the lazy customers would rate between 7 to 10. This feedback is of no value. If a customer were to rate our business lesser than good, he would simply stop coming to us. One bad experience is enough to forget the chain of past good experiences that you have created.

Talk to your customer, ask them open-ended questions, and let them speak. Do not prompt them for answers. Let them open up their unmet needs or problem areas. Where there is a problem, there is an opportunity to solve it and grow.

Once you get a reliable set of problems from your existing customers, wear your thinking hats and find ways of solving these new found problems. If you can find a solution to your customer's problem, you have a pot of gold. Because now you have the customer base ready, they trust you already, so you have an added advantage. You now have a product they want to grab with both hands.

Let me share with you two examples of diversifying and expanding your business base.

1. A tyre dealer had a flourishing business but realised there was only so much business from these customers' cars

and decided to expand his base. He reached out to his clients, understood their needs and leveraged them to grow his business. He started a car detailing business to make his clients happier. The clients who would come once in three years to change their tyres would now come every month to get their cars detailed and fresh. This was even more augmented in different seasons to accommodate the changes in weather. And all this was possible because he listened to his customers' problems, instead of pushing those tyres!

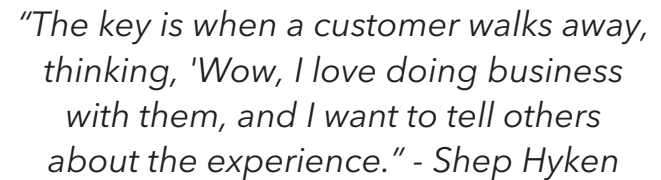
2. A dealer of home baking supplies had a good time selling baking accessories to his customers. Digging in a little, he realised that the majority of his customers were women from the neighbourhood. It was practically an uphill task for him to attract customers from other geographies. But not deterred in his hunger to grow, he studied the trend of his customer base and identified the pattern. He then collaborated with a beauty parlour outlet slightly away from him and they entered into an understanding. The parlour would offer coupons in exchange for a certain amount of business and send customers to the dealer of home baking supplies. And the dealer, in return, would send his ladies with benefit coupons to the beauty parlour. And they both managed this alliance at a near-zero figure for their marketing costs in return for profits.

These were commonplace examples of businessmen leveraging their existing customer base. They invited their customers to do more business with them than before. Other ways of

leveraging are collaborating and tying up with other service providers who complement their services and products.

Thinking beyond, one can consider developing a distributorship channel or retailers. If it appeals to your business, you may also consider franchising and going beyond geographies.

A business owner thinks of linear growth, while a smart business owner thinks of how to make the line go towards exponential growth.



"The key is when a customer walks away, thinking, 'Wow, I love doing business with them, and I want to tell others about the experience.'" - Shep Hyken

- Pick your top ten best customers and have an open-ended conversation with them. Identify what problems they face that are still unresolved or are difficult for them to resolve. Can you find a solution for those problems by adding more varieties or verticals to your business?

- Study your customers and identify where they go besides your establishment. Can you shake hands with those other establishments for business exchange? What synergy can you develop?

- Can you consult your team to identify what difference can be brought in to take the business to new heights? Give them a free hand, and let them brainstorm.

- What is the amount of capital you have invested in your business? How can you leverage that capital to achieve new results?

CHAPTER 27

Categories And Classification

The Pareto principle theorises that 80 percent of the output from a given situation or system is determined by 20 percent of the input. Likewise, it goes on to say that 80% of your sales come from 20% of your clients. It has often been said that the majority of a company's sales come from 20% of its customers. And an assured customer will usually spend more money with you and will be less of a hassle.

The question to the smart business owners is do you believe in this theory, or do you believe in its practicality of it?

By serving exceptionally to the customers you want to do business with, you will encourage them to keep coming back. And to provide exceptional service with the intention of them spending more with us, should you have some metrics and measurements in place?

One needs to identify these 80/20 customers.

- Who brings 80% of your revenue?
- Who do you spend the most time on?
- Are these the same people?

You would probably realise that you spend 80% of your time on these 20% of your customers who are the difficult ones. Your goal is to work with only A and B customers and give your C and D customers a reason to price-shop and haggle with your competitors.

In the action coach parlance of business coaches, we promote the classification of customers into ABCD categories:

- A-category customers are 'Awesome'. They spend more with us, they are good paymasters, and they pay on time. They are simply awesome.
- B-category customers are 'Bearable'. They occasionally are difficult, they tend to haggle for prices, but they give us business. They are just bearable.
- C-category customers are 'Cannot Deal With' customers. They are hagglers for the price, give us an

inch of business and expect a yard in value. We simply cannot deal with this kind of customer.

- D-category customers are 'Dead' customers. They are the ones who have not bought from you in quite some time. Perhaps they have even stopped returning your calls. What do you do?

The Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council recently found that fully two-thirds of those who responded to their benchmarking survey had no system for re-activating their dormant or dead customers. I find this surprising. Many such accounts are languishing in various companies without any closure.

Could they be real prospects?

Those who keep these customers in their dormant state are living on 'hopium', a drug that makes you believe these customers will come around someday, somehow.

Do you have a way to reactivate dead customers, a plan or a process?

In my experience, many of these potential customers had wants, needs and pains to discuss with me. Both parties win when the relationship is re-established or dropped. Closures feel good in all cases.

To categorise your customers, consider categorising them by the magnitude of their turnover. Once done, redo the list by highest to lowest on profit. After taking these points into consideration, look at how they fare in the debtor's book. Some of the questions to ask against each customer's name:

- Are they high maintenance or low? What are the pros and cons?
- Do they bring the best service provider to you?

This can be checked using the RFM method. Against each name in the list, find out:

- The last date of purchase with you- **R**ecency
- How frequently do they do business with you- **F**requency?
- The amount they spend with you- **M**oney
- What are your profit margins against these customers' transactions?
- How much time was spent servicing these customers?

This usually throws up a few surprise contenders for focused marketing and sales effort. Now you know your top 20%. At the same time, never ignore the 80% because sometimes there are niches we are exploring. Now consider:

- What does A-Grade mean to you?

Let us look at what you consider to be a great customer. Write down their attributes:

- Buy regularly
- Pay early
- Cooperative
- Know what they want
- Take advice

- A great source of referrals
- Buy across the range
- Geography
- Don't quibble on price
- Facilitates business
- A pleasure to deal with

2. Ideas for B, C & D:

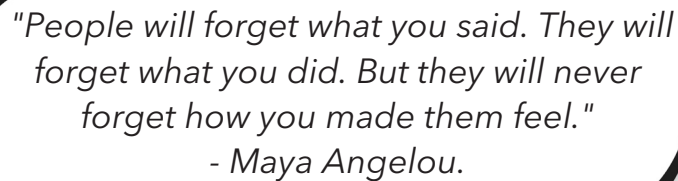
- B – Poor communicators expect more than they pay for
- C – Don't accept advice or build relationships; blame you for their mistakes
- D – Don't engage; it is all about price; pay later and later

Always aim to service only A-grade customers. Some hints and tips for success:

- Know who your best customers are and focus on them to make them as happy as possible to ensure they come back to you time and age
- Treat them like royalty every time
- Think of them in terms of lifetime value
- Offer gifts and rewards for continued patronage, and encourage them to bring their friends
- Sack C and D grade customers. These customers are normally the most demanding of your time, haggle on price, then habitually make late payments, and usually

don't need any encouragement to bring their friends either.

- Send a letter to any customer with that you don't want to do business. Politely outline the client's expectations and business protocols. With this, they would either comply or leave. Just about any customer is not necessarily a good customer. Some actually cost you money, and worse, take your focus from the A-graders.
- When you no longer have to waste time and resources on unprofitable customers, you can devote your time to customers that serve your business and you serve them.



*"People will forget what you said. They will forget what you did. But they will never forget how you made them feel."
- Maya Angelou.*

Activity 27

- Identify your top rated clients - who spend the most with you, who do not give you a headache, and who give you pleasure working with them.

- What will you do to increase this list?

- Identify your Bearable clients. What will you do to take them to the next level, i.e. make them Awesome clients?

- Identify your clients who you cannot deal with.

- What do you propose to do with them?

- Identify the Dead category customers. Assuming that they are not really dead, what will you do to get business from them and revitalise your relationship with them?

CHAPTER 28

Dare To Dream

What are dreams? Dreams are a precursor to reality. You cannot achieve till you dream and aim for it.

Dreams are of varying types in intensity and seriousness. Some dreams are visualised day and night. When one dreams of something and thinks of it day in and day out, it gets installed in the subconscious mind. And it is the subconscious mind that drives the human mind and body.

- What is the dream of a business owner?
- Is it just another random collection of thoughts or a vision for the future?

A good vision, when revisited, visualised and brought into affirmations, enters the subconscious mind. This vision translates abstract into the concrete, a dream towards reality.

Diffusing a little bit of air, what was Thomas Edison doing in his lab when he invented the light bulb? Did he just chance upon it? Is it just another story of perseverance? Or had he visualised a complete Design Thinking process which led him to invent the bulb? Even today, our civilisation is thankful for its creation. Was this an accident or a dream turned into a vision and finally a complete driving force?

The world does not see the dream in you; it sees the actions and results in you deliver. The actions and results do not happen by themselves. The actions happen only when you fire them with the fuel of your dreams.

What happens when you expand your dreams?

When you dream, don't dream less. Dream in abundance. It is the abundance in dreams that expands your capacity and capabilities. Today, you may feel a dream is illogical, unrealistic or even funny. The dream has the potential to translate into a full-blown vision, mission, goal, plan, action and outcome.

It works on the simple principle that what you do repeatedly, you will achieve it eventually. And you achieve good results when you do it with focus. How would you bring focus into the actions you take if you do not fuel it daily?

A young businessman dreamt of converting his small outlet into a multi-storey mall. He enjoyed the dream when he dreamt it; he lived the dream a few days of the week and then what? He forgot about the dream. He forgot because it went down under the noise of his everyday life. And the dream remained buried as a dream.

- Is there any other guiding force more potent than a dream?
- Is there any business that has grown manifolds without a vision?

On the one hand, we have a business owner who dreamt and forgot the dream. While on the other hand, we have a smart business owner who turned his dream into visualisations, created pictures, mind maps, scribbles, doodles, and collages or wrote them in simple language. He visualised his dream in full HD colour every morning and every night. How would that pan out? What if he had turned his imagination into a drawing of the mall, coloured it, given it a name maybe, defined its dimensions, and made a mind map of all the new products and services this mall would offer?


Imagine the power of a dream drawn into visualisation and then etched into his subconscious mind. Day in and day out, he would think and work and focus his energy on achieving the dream. And the result? The result of repeatedly visiting the dream is either polishing and fine tuning the dream or taking concrete steps towards achieving that dream.

How do you expand your dreams?

A dream without a plan is just a dream. It is a ball of energy getting wasted. A dream with a plan, and a plan acted upon, is converting the energy ball from abstract to concrete and achieving results with due focus and dedication.


A dream can be stretched when you convert it into a plan.

Will a smart business owner let his ball of energy go waste or make good use of it?



"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."

- Harriet Tubman.



Activity 28

- Use your creativity and tools (online, paper, paint, colours, cut-outs, etc.) to define your dream. Do not restrict yourself. Consider all that includes - viz. emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual, financial, social, environmental, and spiritual. These dimensions are interconnected.

- Visualise your dream in all these six areas.

CHAPTER 29

Prospects and Potential

Business owners invest a lot of time and resources in approaching and acquiring new customers. This work should not be wasted labour of love. We should learn to recognise whether a potential customer is into our business needs or not. One generally checks whether the spark exists and does collaborating with them makes any business sense or not.

How can you tell whether a client is potential or not:

- Does the client talk openly about problems?
- Do they respond to your emails and calls?
- Do they turn up for the arranged meetings?
- Are they committed to taking further action?
- Do they keep their word?
- Am I respected as a Solutions Provider to their problem?

In sales, there is always a need for two people to fit together, you and the potential customer. If things don't go well together, it is okay. The world is full of potential customers. Have you ever been in a situation where a potential client just wasn't the right fit for you?

I often share an anecdote with salespeople and entrepreneurs: not everyone is your client. I met someone who wanted to work with me, so I did an assessment with them. I spent half a day observing their business practices and processes, asking questions, and gathering information. By the end of my time with them, I knew they were not going to be a good fit for them or for me. I, therefore, put together a summary of my findings and gave them ideas where appropriate. And I told them that I was not a good fit for them. It was tough because it was early in my career when I needed clients. It worked out for the best in the end.

Was it all because of a misfit - or was it because of gaps in perception?

I learned that it is okay to say No to a customer! I could not

change the customer, nor could I change myself to align with the expectations of this customer. Though, there was money left on the table, which did not change hands!

You can't change everything or everyone, but you can change the people who matter. You can change the desired audience where your prospect stays, but you can't change the truth of what they want and believe.

Changing your prospect's actions, perceptions, or conversation is possible when the result is specific, not general.

So the first, most important question is, "Who do we want to change?"

For better results out of prospecting (and indirectly marketing, too), one needs to know clearly about the prospect through these questions:

- What does the prospect believe about you?
- What is your customer afraid of?
- What does your prospect think he wants?
- What does the prospect actually want?
- What stories have resonated with him in the past that will influence his decision?
- Who does your prospect follow and emulate and look up to?
- What is his appetite or budget?
- What channel does your prospect listen to for communications?

- Which media does he follow or rely on for authenticity?
- Who does he trust and who does he pay attention to?
- What is the source of his urgency—why will he change now rather than later?
- After he has changed, what will he tell his friends?

These questions, when thought upon and worked on, will serve you with a window into the Design Thinking of your prospect's needs. You can now find ways of assisting your prospect with the right solutions.

"Spend a lot of time talking to customers face-to-face. You'd be amazed how many companies don't listen to their customers."

- Ross Perot.

Activity 29

- Make a list of three of your best customers (or your dream customers). Describe his problems in detail.

- Does your prospective customer have a need to buy your services? Does he have a problem that is unsolved? What if the problem continues to remain unsolved? Does he have the budget to afford them? Is your prospect the decision maker?

- Can you make a checklist of what needs to be ascertained before taking him further in the Sales process?

CHAPTER 30

What's Your Game Plan?

I often ask businessmen if they have a business plan. And, by and large, everyone says, “Yes, I have a plan.” And when I ask them what their plan is, they touch the back of their head, saying, “It is right here, well within my easy reach.” Wondering what that means, baffled, I ask them, “Is that the idea of a business plan; a dream without concrete steps for

execution, is that a plan?”

Frankly and admitting, the thought of ‘planning’ itself is tiresome to many, including business owners. One must not confuse dreaming and hope with planning. Hoping something will happen is a dream and hoping that you will do something is hope. None of these can replace the power of planning. Planning for the future is so abstract and straining on the mind that it immediately veers toward lesser stressful activities. Planning is to find a way to convert the abstract into the concrete. It needs thinking in dedicated quality time. One must keep the dream and hope in mind and find time to deliberate on it. And once you find the time to deliberate on it, you will be able to focus on it too.

A business owner is so engrossed in his day-to-day execution of work that he does not get time to sit down and think of “actionable steps” for the future. He keeps pushing things to the future, hoping that they will happen in the near future. So the real reason why a business plan does not exist - is procrastination. He did not keep aside any dedicated time to look into it.

One has a complex approach to business planning. Every business plan need not be complex. To make a business plan, all you need is a vision mapped to a goal. And then some quality time to sit down, away from the daily grind, and use that time to make a plan.

The basis of a business plan starts from a vision. At the beginning of every business planning, one must sit down and recreate or revisit their vision and bring it to the dream board. Once done,

reflect on what was achieved in the last quarter and what could be done better and then accordingly project what dream you want to create for the next quarter.

Once your reason for the plan is achieved, then focus on what is required to be done to be able to achieve it. Prioritise this and map it across the quarter. There will be a temptation to over-commit and achieve everything in the first week or first month. Hold your temptation there, bring in some practicality and span the tasks across the months logically.

Plan all the areas well, including processes, training, customers, customer education, competition, market awareness, research, experimentation, finance, optimisation, trading, new customer acquisition, staff to team orientation, staff retention, etc. Identify the pain areas and the wish list. And start building from there.

Now that you have the priorities defined and spread across the calendar relax. Spread these tasks across different weeks. Do not overcommit to yourself. From the entire basket of things to do, stick to a practical limit only. Every human has got a limitation and similarly does your business. One cannot handle too many changes at the same time.

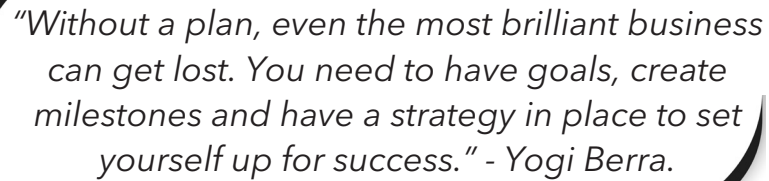
Once you have your priorities straight, then link these goals to the weeks and days and work towards them.

The real power of the plan lies in bringing clarity to thoughts and focus and sets you on a path of execution.

I often wonder when an entrepreneur can achieve and create such a lot without a written plan; just what levels will he reach

once he starts with a proper plan and works towards it?

What tremendous potential will this discipline unbox?



"Without a plan, even the most brilliant business can get lost. You need to have goals, create milestones and have a strategy in place to set yourself up for success." - Yogi Berra.

Activity 30

- Make a list of all the problems that you face in your business. The longer the list, the better. I recommend the list be at least 50 points long.

- Once you make this list, put a number mentioning the intensity and priority to it.

- Now, pick only the topmost (in terms of priority and intensity) and set a practical date when you want to work on them, (Remember, you have done this in Activity 10)

- Now that you have set the Intensity, Priority and Date of Finishing for the topmost problems, break the problem solutions into smaller bite-sized tasks. Spread these tasks across your calendar weeks and days. And follow this schedule towards completion.

- Once you are done working on and achieving these tasks - you will be ready to pick the next lot of problems to solve (or focus on growth) in the coming quarters.

Epilogue

*"You can do anything you think you can.
This knowledge is literally the gift of the
Almighty, for, through it, you can solve
every human problem. It should make
you an incurable optimist. It is the
open the door to welfare."*

-Robert Collier

Dear Reader,

Thank you for bearing with me through this book. Reading through this page makes me believe that you found the ideas relatable as well as useful.

I trust that the activities I had asked you to attempt at the end of every chapter have opened new vistas for you. I am aware these questions are deep, thought-provoking, maybe hard-hitting, or even direct. These questions are designed to shake you out of your comfort zone and get you thinking.

After a few weeks, you may not remember much of what is shared in this book. That's okay; it is how we humans are programmed. We forget easily. I have put in my best to bring these concepts to you in succinct language, with real-life stories to make the whole experience realistic and matter-of-fact, and the activities to keep us alert.

I am a talkative person. And my editor has done a good job at trimming the stories and letting go of the narrative wherever appropriate. I wish Mona, Benedict, Param, Taher, Nikhil, Jayshree and all the characters in my stories safe passage back to where they came from.

I wish and urge you to stay on track. Pay good attention to your goals and plans. Do not give up when it is tough or when things don't work out in the first instance. Be consistent. It pays to do so.

Business grows when you work on it. And that is what it takes. There are no miracles. But yes, there are a string of simple, practical steps, when implemented, will ensure the enormous success that you rightly deserve.

As you read the book, you may have felt motivated and inspired as we feel after attending some seminar. Staying on top and feeling new energy each day is what you will achieve through disciplined work.

Question yourself and keep pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. Read and re-read this book again. I promise every time you read, it will stimulate a new way of looking at things, provided it is followed by prompt actions.

Feel free to reach out to me with your observations or questions needs to consult me or to get you into the habit of planning.

I love linking with people. I love hearing what you have to say. Reach out to me through my LinkedIn handle - <https://bit.ly/HuzefaM>

Don't be the same. Be better.